Film Quarterly

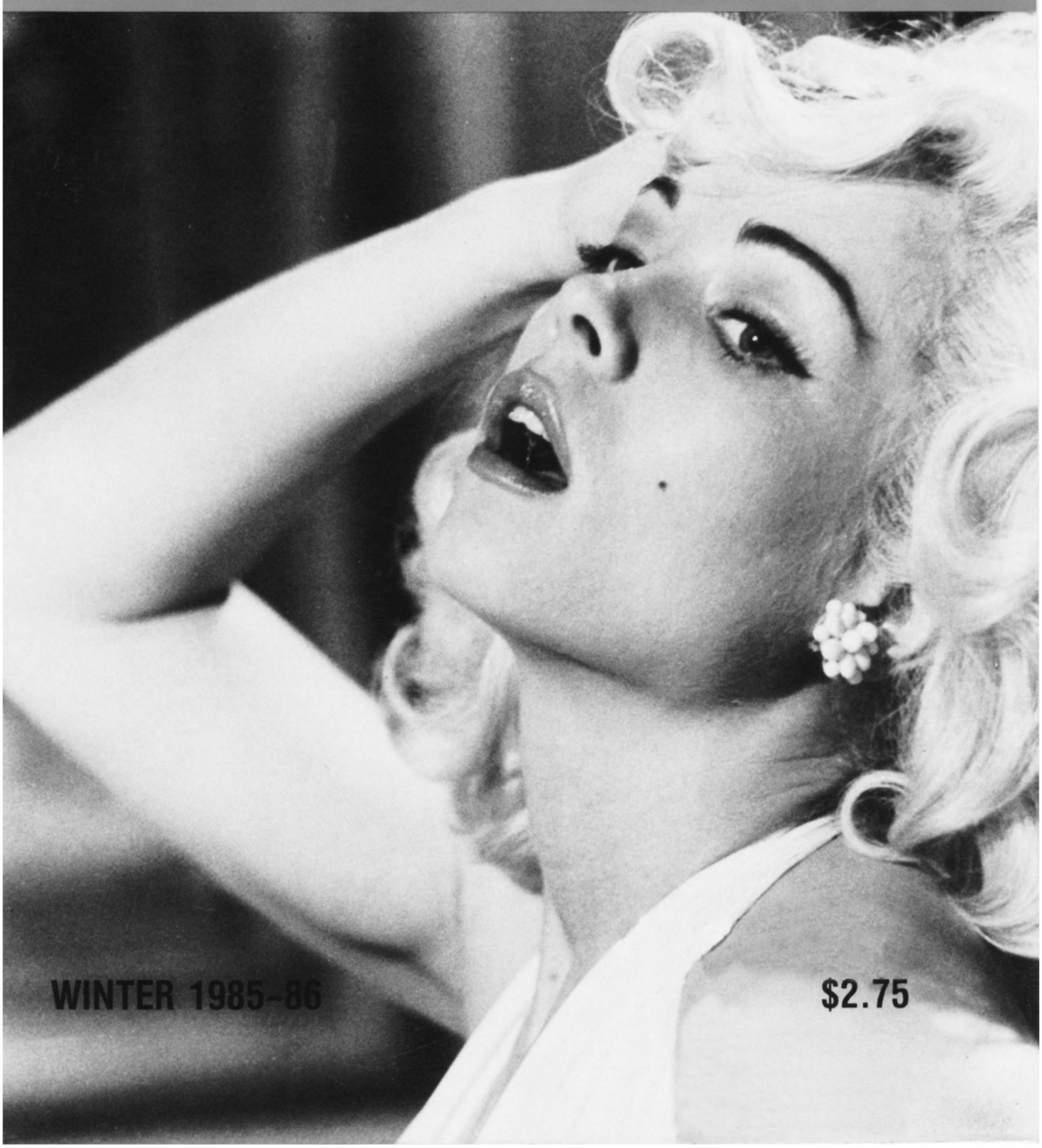
GODARD'S *HAIL MARY*

BALLAD OF THE LITTLE SOLDIER

PRESTON STURGES AT WORK

ICONOGRAPHY: FORD & EISENSTEIN

EUREKA AND *INSIGHIFICANCE*



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KATHERINE DIECKMANN

Godard in His "Fifth Period"

AN INTERVIEW

Jean-Luc Godard's *Hail, Mary* has been causing a stir. The modern retelling of the immaculate conception—with Mary as a sullen basketball-playing teen pumping gas in her father's station, Joseph as a sexually frustrated cabdriver, and the archangel Gabriel as an unshaven tough with a cherubic little girl spouting lines like "Be pure, be rough, follow thy way"—has rallied religious groups and scared distributors on our shores and abroad. From the Pope's Vatican Radio denunciations and Italian magazine covers depicting bare-breasted blondes on crucifixes, to Catholics lighting candles and shaking rosaries outside offending theaters, *Hail, Mary* is one of those newsworthy movies that sells itself on free publicity alone.

Expecting "the most controversial film of our time," audiences have been understandably disappointed. Yes, there is nudity and a brief, graphic quasi-masturbation scene overlaid with a juicily blasphemous Artaud quotation—but other than this, there's little subversive in the film. It's sedate when judged by the criteria of rupture and dissociation we've come to call "Godardian." Having located the ideal story of noncausality, Godard lets the tale itself critique the desire for explanation. This is a film where the birth of Jesus is no more than a few newborn cries set against an image of a snowplow, shot from the rear, chugging down a nocturnal winter road.

If one seeks a radical Godard, he is to be found in his video collaborations with Anne-Marie Miéville ("France-Tour-Detour-Deux-Enfants," "Sur et sous la communication," 1976–78, and the video scenario for *Passion*), just recently being shown in the States. Miéville, Godard's working partner of over fifteen years, contributed what Godard calls "a long short story" to his "short long story" with her *Book of Mary,* which prefaces *Hail, Mary.* A startlingly clear look at how a parental separation affects a precocious girl (Mary, who recites Baudelaire and externalizes anger via violent, freestyle dances), Miéville's short is brilliant and assured. Though Godard claims that both films were conceived, written and shot separately, they are full of resonant affinities in imagery and idea.

Hail, Mary is meditative, serene. With its sumptuous nature photography, juxtapositions of bird sounds and Bach and somber entertainment of the presence of the inexplicable in our world, this is an extraordinarily soulful film. It is serious. And so, more or less, is Godard. He is patient when he explains, for the umpteenth time, why he asked his Italian distributor to pull the film from Rome: "It's the house of the church, and if the Pope didn't want a bad boy running around in his house, the least I could do is respect his wishes. This Pope has a special relationship to Mary; he considers her a daughter almost. There were other cities for the film. We didn't need Rome."

This is not a charged, mischievous Godard—though it's not necessarily a more honest one, either. He is if anything a more cunning and subtle dispense of "fictions." The historicized Godard of the New Wave, the new narrative, the newly politicized film-making of the late sixties and early seventies, is to be distinguished from the contemplative, middle-aged Godard—one closer to the mild-mannered, somewhat shellshocked patriarch figure he played in *First Name: Carmen.* Some say Godard has lost his punch. Others say he's simply traded Marxism for mysticism.

Godard sits alone in a plush room at New York's Park-Lane Hotel, puffing on what has become his trademark cigar. A French edition of Rilke's *Letter to a Young Poet,* a stack of newspapers and an unopened bottle of Jack Daniels are on the desk before him. His English is excellent. He speaks softly, sucking in a little breath of air at the end of his sentences which threatens to make the final words disappear. One hears in Godard's answers the desire for pared-down explanations, ones like Gabriel's response to Joseph during a scuffle in *Hail, Mary.* Joseph asks over and over why he may not touch Mary, and Gabriel, catching

© 1985 Katherine Dieckmann

his opponent in a stranglehold, shouts abruptly: "parce que! ("Because!")

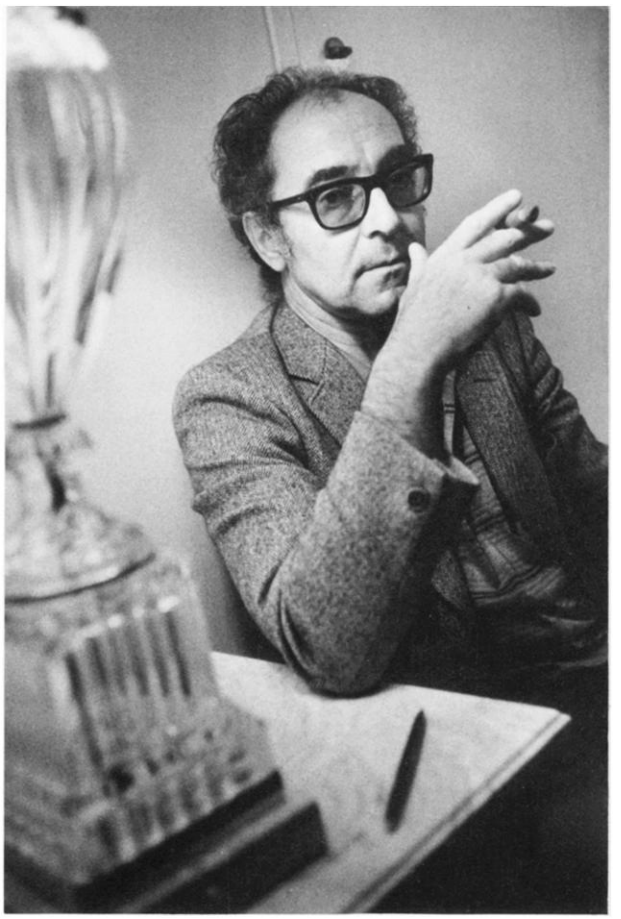
•

Are you a Catholic?

No, I was raised a Protestant, but I don't practice. But I'm very interested in Catholicism. I think there's something so strong in the way the Bible was written, how it speaks of events that are happening today, how it contains statements about things which have happened in the past. I think, well—it's a great book! And somehow I think we need faith, or I need faith, or I'm lacking in faith. Therefore maybe I needed a story which is bigger than myself. I like it that *Hail, Mary* is being really discussed. Instead of people saying, "Oh, it's directed by Godard," people are talking about the subject of the film first. Later they say, "It's by Godard."

It's a sincerely spiritual film. What about it do you think is offending the Catholics most? The obsessive nudity?

Probably. But you know, our purpose was to try and shoot a woman naked and not make it aggressive, not in an X-rated-picture way. There are several shots which have more the purpose of an anatomical drawing. Maybe the nudity's a bit much. It encounters the risk of becoming sinister. Or sin, even. Perhaps that's too big a word. But it was difficult to know how to show it. Very often in painting, the Virgin is depicted half-naked, or at least with the breast naked or revealed, because of the Christ child. This has always caused problems: in the time of Martin Luther, there was a great deal of opposition to Raphael, for instance. The German soldiers came to Rome and scratched up many Raphael paintings. They thought it was offensive, too much of a *Playboy* style of painting. In *Hail, Mary* I was trying to make the audience see not a naked woman, but flesh, if that's at all possible. And the difference between—a feeling of something fleshy. And we had thought of having Joseph be naked also, as we had a nude male in *First Name: Carmen,* but decided the audience wouldn't understand, they would immediately think Mary and Joseph were going to have intercourse. So it was absolutely impossible. And I'm a man, still, I like to look at women naked!



Jean-Luc Godard in New York. (Photo: Paula Court)

You're dealing with this opposition between science and nature, or logic and illogic, in this movie. The men are associated with the logical, the women with the intuitive. And you're using a very different set of symbols. Usually your films are full of quotations from popular culture, with bits of traffic signs, neon, advertisements, cartoons. The signs in Hail, Mary *are very pure: a moon, a sun, water. Apples. Some of the images are even a little corny, like* National Geographic *photography.*

Well, women are more casual. They accept more things. Whereas men always feel they have to master, to understand. As for these symbols, we shot exactly like the old-time Walt Disney documentaries were shot. We set up a camera and were waiting, waiting, waiting until a certain time when you got the exceptional in everyday, natural things. I mean, we shot the sun, but we needed to have a plane cross the sun, and it doesn't happen every second! It's a one-time thing. That's why we went over budget with *Hail, Mary* and had to stop and shoot *Détective* to make some money, and then go back and finish

THE BOOK OF MARY: *Anne-Marie Miéville's companion film to Godard's* HAIL MARY.

Hail, Mary, which was very disruptive. I didn't want to make *Détective* at all, though I don't mind it now that I've done it. But it was an unwanted child, and then what do you do? You have to take care of it. What we wanted to show in *Hail, Mary* was signs in the beginning. Signs in the sense of signals, the beginning of signs, when signs are beginning to grow. Before they have signification of meaning. Immaculate signs in a way. And not just to give a feeling of nature, in order to be poetic, but to show the physical process of making nature possible. A philosophy of nature, just as we tried to show the spirit and flesh of Mary. Also to bring science close to the natural, not to show them as oppositions. Because there's a scene where the professor is talking about creation—the text comes from the work of a British physicist—and it sounds very Biblical or religious. We are an extra-terrestrial people, as it says in the film. We come from the sky. And it's not by chance, but by design.

And you have so many images of the circle, in nature and elsewhere, which gives the movie a strong feeling of unity.

Yes, the circle. We used it metaphorically: the woman as circle, and the plane flying toward it. That's one signal: coming to a woman's center. But at a certain point there's no difference between metaphor and actuality. I had no idea we'd shot the moon so many times, but then suddenly we had all these shots of the moon, and I discovered then that the moon was like the basketball in Mary's games. So it was the same: Mary was playing basketball with the moon.

Tell me about the use of sound, because it's very complex.

I try to work not with an idea of vertical sound, where there are many tracks distinct from one another, but horizontally, where there are many, many sounds but still it's as though every sound is becoming one general speech, whether it's music, dialogue or natural sound. *Hail, Mary* had more of a documentary use of sound than other films I've done. It's simple in a way: there's dialogue, direct sound and music. The story was known, more or less. And I knew that the only music that would work would be Bach. I tried to put in all sorts of Bach: violins, church music, piano, choral. The picture could be described also as a documentary on Bach's music. And it couldn't have been Beethoven, or Mozart, because historically Bach was the music of Martin Luther. And as I was saying before, Martin Luther was attacking the Catholic church, specifically the way the Catholic church makes images. Probably in his time Bach was immensely popular, because his music was played in churches that had no heat, and it was probably very cold in church, and you needed a strong and passionate music. It's a strange thing, but if you have good speakers and play Bach very, very loud —even if it's just a smooth piano piece—it sounds like rock music. Bach's music can be matched to any situation. It's perfect. When you play it in reverse, it sounds almost the same. It's very mathematical. You could play it in the elevator, like Musak. It blends itself. Bach is the perfect musician for the elevator.

Before you shot Hail, Mary, *you said "It will be about what Mary and Joseph said to each other before having a child." Does this still apply now that the movie's done?*

Yes, exactly. What could they say to each other? It's a major problem, because from the Bible we know of only two or three words that Mary spoke, and from Joseph absolutely nothing. And they must have talked together! So it was difficult to invent the dialogue, because nobody knows.

You've also said that one film always leads directly into the next with you. So how does the story of Carmen become the story of Mary?

Well, Carmen leads to Mary, though of course they're very different. Carmen is more what men imagine women to be. And with Mary, it's more a matter that a man *can't* imagine what a woman is. And, of course,

Godard's HAIL MARY

one story ends well and the other ends quite badly.

What about your King Lear *project with Golan and Globus? What do you think about working with producers in America who make mostly commercial, action movies?*

Well, *Lear* I'm not sure about yet. It's just a project at this point, and I'm going to do another movie in between, though that isn't decided either. I've never read it, you know.

Oh, come on!

I don't know much. I'm not a very good pretender. (Laughs) I just know it's about some old man and his young daughter, or three daughters, but one specifically. Of course I'll read it before I shoot. People tell me it's a great story, but it's just one I've heard of, like the story of Carmen or the story of Mary. I met Golan and Globus just crossing the street one day at Cannes. And they approached me. I'd never talked to them before. And we crossed the street together, and in crossing the street we made a fast deal. It's a very specific agreement, so I'm not worried about it. They are the only people now who aren't pessimistic about the future of motion pictures, and that's good enough for me. I haven't seen any of the movies they financed, but I really want to see the Chuck Norris movie. I'll wait until it comes to Paris.

Do you go to the movies a lot? I know when you were young and writing for Cahiers du Cinéma *in the fifties you were notorious for spending all day in the cinema.*

No, no, I don't go very much at all. I have a feeling these days that just by knowing the names of the directors and actors involved, and by looking at the ads in the paper or on the street, I've already seen the pictures.

Are you still living outside Geneva? And why did you choose to shoot Hail, Mary *in Switzerland?*

Yes, I live in Switzerland, though I have a company located in Paris. I've shot there before—*Every Man for Himself* was shot in Switzerland, and parts of *Passion*. I've been there since my childhood. I was raised there, had family there, though I also have family in Paris. I've always been crossing borders. I belong to two countries, even if I have only one passport, Swiss. I choose Switzerland to shoot in because—I don't know, already I've used Paris and Parisian streets so much, in my earlier films.

Let's talk about your work in general, or the way it's been periodized. In 1970 a lot of books came out dealing with your work on the sixties: there was this impulse to talk about

Godard. And then in the seventies the image is that you drifted off, got involved in video and political projects. Then when Every Man for Himself *came out in 1980 you described it as "your second first film."*

It works in periods of ten years, yes, because we live in a decimal system. We have ten fingers. So we always invent in periods of ten. Ten years after ten years. I'm past 50 now, so I speak of myself as being in my "fifth period." I began shooting in 1960, I mean *really* shooting, and then in 1970 I changed more or less, and then in 1980 started up again . . . I'm very regular! Now it's 1985. I have to wait until 1990.

You're at the midpoint of the third chapter, because now you've amassed an entire second set of feature films: Every Man for Himself, First Name: Carmen, Détective *and* Hail, Mary.

I'll use the same words as Picasso, not to compare myself to him, but because they fit. He said, "I will go on painting until painting refuses me and doesn't want me anymore." I'm trying to do this with motion pictures. To go until motion pictures refuse me. Not an audience, and certainly not the industry—the industry already did! But to go until the screen says: No. I had the feeling in making *Hail, Mary* that there was an immaculate screen, and it was saying to me, "Don't stray too far, or don't come too close. Or come closer. Or don't come." I had the feeling of a voice there.

Have your working methods changed after 25 years of making films?

I am closer to images now. Part of this comes from having worked in video, which I'm doing more and more. I use video to help me see and work better, because I can shoot something and see it immediately, all the while imagining a real screen behind. Video lets me look first, and then I can begin to write from what I see. Before—just like most movie-makers and industry executives—I always wrote first, and then let the image come. I would write about you: "She sat in the corner, she looked at me with such a face," then I'd imagine the face and direct it. Now I look at you and imagine first, and take notes from that. Most people think they work only when the camera is rolling, but that's not it. When the camera rolls, everything is done already. It's like life. Take this hotel room. When two newlyweds enter this room, they know what they are going to do, they've written it before, in the elevator or on the street. And the real work's been done on the street or in the elevator. Here's the completion of the work: the camera's rolling. Cinematographers shoot a movie, and then for six months they don't touch a camera! What makes them think they're still working when they're not looking? Images are like life. And images can show you something in your life you don't want to see, which is probably why people react violently to *Hail, Mary*. If you're jealous, you don't want to see the image of the other man or the other woman right away. Things like that. The image is something very strong when it comes at you. That's why movies are so popular. But it's not dangerous. A lot of people don't want to go to the doctor. They don't want to know what kind of disease they have, or how a disease might look. Maybe I can look because my father was a doctor. I was raised not to be afraid of certain categories of truth.

HAIL MARY

GEORGE PAUL CSICSERY

Ballad of the Little Soldier: Werner Herzog in a Political Hall of Mirrors

In 1981–1982 soldiers of the revolutionary Sandinista government of Nicaragua evacuated and burned a number of Miskito Indian villages along Nicaragua's border with Honduras. Most of the inhabitants were forcibly resettled in camps, but several thousand chose refuge across the Rio Coco in Honduras.

Filmed in northeastern Nicaragua and southeastern Honduras, *Ballad of the Little Soldier* is a 45-minute documentary about the Miskito Indians and their rebellion against the Sandinistas. Co-directed by Werner Herzog and French-German journalist Denis Reichle, the film has become a controversial element in the propaganda struggle between the Sandinistas and the US-backed Contra rebel groups fighting to overthrow them. At the center of the controversy is the Sandinista accusation that *Ballad of the Little Soldier* is damaging to their cause because it can be exploited by their enemies—the Contras and the CIA. Herzog has countered that he is not against the Sandinistas, but simply for the Miskitos.

The film does contain interviews with Miskitos which tell of widespread Sandinista abuses—including torture and massacres, and the material is unquestionably damaging to the government of Nicaragua. Although these atrocity stories are an important part of the film, their purpose is to provide a backdrop to the film's main theme, the story of ten-to-fourteen-year-old Miskito boys being trained to fight in the Misura army against the Sandinistas. Critics of the film have concentrated on defending the reputation of the Sandinistas, and have ignored the very disturbing but genuine contributions of Herzog and Reichle to the documentary genre.

Dr. Roxanne Dunbar Ortiz, publisher and editor of *Indigenous World* and a specialist on Miskito Indian issues, is among the film's most outspoken opponents. In April, 1985, she appeared at nearly every screening of the film during a week-long run in San Francisco. In a leaflet she distributed at the screenings, Ortiz writes that "Herzog's romanticism about Indians, actually a form of racism, has transformed one of the brilliant living film-makers into an opportunistic lackey for the CIA." The accusation is only one of many through which Ortiz attempts to discredit Herzog, Reichle, and most of the people appearing in the film (see box).

A few minutes into *Ballad of the Little Soldier* there is a series of interviews in which people describe how Sandinista soldiers treated them. Herzog provides the English translation in his own voice. A 15-year-old girl dressed in combat fatigues and carrying a rifle shows the camera where her house once stood. The place, Herzog explains, is the former site of one of 60 villages burned by the Sandinistas along the Rio Coco. A 40-year-old man, who has since joined the Misura rebel army, then describes the day the Sandinista army came to his town. He stands next to a corner post jutting up from the dense undergrowth—all that remains of his house.

"People started running away, and the ones who were caught were killed. The others were shot at as they tried to escape. Children were hit. The soldiers tied up their prisoners and then beheaded them or shot them. They had left the corpses tied to the stakes. They were still there days later, decaying. Women were among them. Bombs were dropped from a helicopter. Everything was razed to the ground . . ."

As the man tells the story he goes into a frenzy, racing from one tree stump to the next, bending his head sideways and striking

During the week that *Ballad of the Little Soldier* premiered at the Roxie Theater in San Francisco, a peculiar skirmish in the propaganda war that shadows the real war in Nicaragua was played out in the American press.

In April, 1985, *Newsweek* published a series of color photographs showing a man digging his own grave and getting into it. In the last shot a khaki-clad figure leans over the victim and slits his throat. The captions stated that the pictures showed Contra soldiers executing a Sandinista informant they had captured on a raid into Nicaragua. The young American photographer who had sent the stills to *Newsweek* icily added that the execution, in his opinion, was necessary—because the informant would have given away the position of the Contras had they let him go.

Amost immediately, the US State Department issued a denunciation of the shots as fakes, calling them a not-too-clever attempt at disinformation. To support the claim, the State Department pointed out that the uniform worn by the "Contra" soldier shown cutting the informant's throat was no longer in use among *real* Contra troops. The implication was that the pictures and the story had been fabricated by Sandinista sympathizers.

A similar political *Rashomon* story has surrounded *Ballad of the Little Soldier* since it was first aired on German television late in 1984. Dr. Roxanne Dunbar Ortiz, the film's most virulent self-appointed opponent, is a professor of Ethnic Studies at California State University, Hayward, and a member of the Independent Commission on International Humanitarian Issues, "a United Nations consultative non-governmental organization which focuses on Indians in Central America, particularly the Miskitus." Ortiz denounced the film, the people in it, and Werner Herzog in a flurry of accusations so wild they demanded follow-up investigation. The substance of her charges make Herzog out to be something between a malicious racist liar and a blundering romantic fool victimized by the CIA in an elaborate con game. To help me sort it all out, Ortiz invited me to interview her at her San Francisco apartment.

On the appointed day I was driving to meet with Ortiz when a pickup truck pulled up next to me at a stop light. The young Latin driver sported a military crewcut and wore a well-pressed camouflage shirt. As we waited at the light he held up a copy of *Newsweek* opened to the pictures of the man having his throat cut. He held the magazine out the window and pointed at the photos with his other hand.

"Communist sons of bitches," he yelled at me, smiling.

I asked him where he was from. "Managua," he answered.

While the incident was unnerving, the interview with Roxanne Ortiz proved even more so (see text of story). Well-versed in the arcane history of Sandinista-Miskito relations, Ortiz spends a good portion of her time in Nicaragua. In 1984 she contributed to a *CoEvolution Quarterly* investigation of the Miskito controversy. While claiming to represent indigenous Indian interests, Ortiz is a staunch supporter of the Sandinista government of Nicaragua. She is quick to level charges against anyone who questions the behavior of that government. In the same issue of *CoEvolution Quarterly* (Fall 1984) that Ortiz contributed to, Bernard Nietschmann, himself a controversial figure in the Miskito-Sandinista debates, all but accused Ortiz of being a paid Sandinista agent. He wrote that she paid $30,000 out of her own pocket for a *New York Times* ad condemning Nietschmann's testimony on Sandinista mistreatment of the Miskitos before the Organization of American States. During our interview, Ortiz admitted participating in the evacuation of the Miskitos from their villages along the Rio Coco. Her version of what happened differs considerably from the accounts in *Ballad of the Little Soldier* and she maintains that the film contains numerous falsehoods.

Ortiz wrote Herzog, listing her charges; and he wrote back, categorically denying each item. Ortiz, however, has continued to repeat the same charges. Frustrated by the disparities, I gathered a list of claims made by Ortiz during our interview and wrote Herzog. He responded by letter to each point, and added a description of his experiences in Nicaragua as a guest of the Sandinistas, much of which is in the story. —G.C.

at his own neck with the edge of his hand to simulate machete blows on the necks of victims.

"It is hard to believe that the Sandinistas could truly have wanted what happened," says Herzog, prefacing this account. Afterwards he speculates on possible reasons for the atrocities:

"The Sandinista explanation was that it was a military necessity. Probably the Sandinistas wanted to rapidly advance the Miskitos into modern forms of socialism. That meant having to destroy the old village structures."

Roxanne Dunbar Ortiz insists that the people in these interviews are liars. She claims that Herzog interviewed only members of a cacique class who had previously oppressed the Miskitos, and were deposed by the Sandinistas. She describes the man who so dramatically depicted the massacre on the Rio Coco as "one of the most hated people among the Miskitos themselves—a brutal person."

Ortiz claims no one was killed during the evacuation and destruction of the Miskito villages on the Rio Coco. As she talks about the operations, it becomes obvious that she participated on the Sandinista side.

"I was helping some people move," she admits. "People didn't object to being moved. They were begging to be allowed to go somewhere."

When asked why the villages were burned, Ortiz says, "It would have been ridiculous to remove the people living there without burning the villages. The two were totally together. The decision about evacuation always included the burning of the villages." It sounds curiously like the explanation given a TV newsman by a US Marine in the act of torching a Vietnamese village. "We had to destroy it to save it," said the Marine.

When the comparison was pointed out to her, Ortiz tried to sugar-coat the burning of the Miskito villages. "It wasn't done in any vindictive or violent way," said Ortiz. "I was there when villages were burned."

While the atrocity testimonials are important for establishing the reasons behind Miskito disaffection with the Sandinista revolution, the central focus of *Ballad of the Little Soldier* is on the military activities of the Misura guerrillas. For Herzog, the story of an Indian insurrection resonates with ideas and emotions

Herzog filming BALLAD OF THE LITTLE SOLDIER

he has previously explored in *Aguirre* and *Fitzcarraldo,* with one major difference.

In the earlier films Herzog always told the story from the point of view of the Europeans, who were outsiders attempting to impose their sense of order on the uncooperative jungle. He stuck with them as the intruders were gradually defeated and swallowed up by a vicious, chaotic state of nature. In *Ballad of the Little Soldier* Herzog's camera is finally on the other side of that story, with the Indians—where he has always longed to be. He accompanies Miskito Indian commandos on a raid, and marches triumphantly with them into a "liberated" village.

Herzog owes much of this intimate access to the Miskito side of a nasty civil war to Denis Reichle, his co-director. The collaboration between them has a far more elaborate function in the film than that of film-maker-guide/researcher. Reichle's role is, in fact, a dominant theme that remains concealed until near the end when Reichle emerges as a central character, being himself a historical link to the boy soldiers in the film. But until that dramatic coup is delivered, Herzog and Reichle switch back and forth between atrocity stories and lushly photographed scenes that could easily be part of an adventure epic.

Ballad of the Little Soldier opens with a close-up of a young boy, ten to twelve years old, dressed in combat fatigues, listening to a Spanish song on a cassette player. When the shot ends, Herzog's voice explains that the film crew had to spend weeks traversing the jungle behind enemy lines to reach the village in Nicaragua where some of the scenes were filmed. He then provides a summary of Miskito history.

"The Miskitos have always been badly treated . . . Somoza's soldiers plundered their villages . . . Today, because of the failure of the Sandinistas to deal with them any better, many of the Miskitos are fighting the new rulers of the country. The Indians have no illusions; they know they will always have to defend themselves, regardless of who eventually succeeds the Sandinistas."

Cut to a scene of commandos crossing a river in a power boat. The armed men are tense and silent as the boat nears the opposite shore. Then we hear the sound of shots, and the commandos scatter on the beach. Herzog excitedly narrates that this is a raid across the Rio Coco from Honduras into Nicaragua. Ortiz, however, has charged that Herzog was not present when the scene was shot, and that the location is not on the Rio Coco. She believes that the scene is an exercise filmed somewhere else. Herzog has repeatedly denied all of these allegations.

Because the raiding party has been discovered, they spend days slogging through jungle swamps before being turned back—mission unaccomplished—by the lack of drinking water. Herzog's dry narration punches up the futility of the operation.

The most blatantly romantic scene in the film begins with a wide shot of a ragtag group of Misura soldiers, some mounted on small horses, entering a village. The camera cuts to villagers warily eyeing the troops as Herzog describes their inherent mistrust of soldiers—any soldiers—until they learn that "these are their soldiers." The villagers are then shown linking hands with the troops and welcoming them in song.

Once a sense of unity between the Misura army and the Miskito villagers has been established, the film moves on through the detailed atrocity stories. Some were shot in Nicaragua, others in the refugee camps of Honduras, but all of these horror stories are building blocks meant to support the key sequences filmed at the training camp where Miskito boys are being readied for battle by a Drill Instructor (DI) who was formerly a member of Anastasio Somoza's National Guard.

One ten-year-old soldier says that he has joined the Misura forces because he saw the Sandinistas kill his two younger brothers "just for fun." Most of the children interviewed want to kill Sandinistas to avenge their kin. The dedicated young DI explains in very poor English that the children would have been drafted had they remained in Nicaragua —but by the Sandinistas. He declares his total confidence in the boy soldiers, claiming that when sent into battle such young soldiers have fought more valiantly than adults.

As the DI explains the advantages of turning children into soldiers, Denis Reichle gradually works his way into the film. He has been shown only once before, during the scene of the commandos crossing the river.

"The mind is not corrupt yet, so we can prepare him and train him to be a professional soldier against the communists," says the DI.

"You think he knows what is communist?" Reichle asks the DI in English.

"All of them know the situation that our people are living in: why he had to run, and his mother and dad has died. He know why . . . what communism means."

Reichle presses the point. "Can you ask him?"

As the DI asks the boy in Spanish, Herzog translates into English, saying that the boy answers Reichle's question with the words, "They are puny runts." Herzog's voice expresses satisfaction that Reichle has scored a kind of victory point over the DI. It is the beginning of a major shift in the direction of a film that is nearly over.

The DI continues to expound on why the boys make excellent soldiers. "This is the best age because their minds are clean, their minds are free to take in the training that you are giving them, and . . ."

"That means you can brainwash them," interrupts Reichle.

"Yes," answers the DI. "You can brainwash them . . ." Another point has been scored over the hapless DI, who is clearly not up on the connotations of brainwashing in the English-speaking world. He has been trapped by Reichle in an ambush captured on film. But why? Are not Reichle and Herzog sympathetic to the Miskito cause? The answer, which is also the answer to the question of why this film is being made, remains concealed for yet another minute.

The DI begins to deliver a passionate patriotic speech to the young troops assembled on the parade ground. He embellishes the speech

Drill instructor and young Miskito soldiers

with the words, "We are assembled here in *Nicaragua* . . ." which Herzog instantly contradicts in an editorial aside, confiding that the camp is actually in Honduras, and that the DI has lied for the benefit of the camera. Herzog's remark is a way of telling his audience: "You see, in the interest of heightened dramatic values I could have corroborated the DI's lie, but instead, I exposed it." The technique is designed to hold the audience's trust in Werner Herzog's integrity, a trust that Herzog seems aware is to be severely tested by this film. The exposure of the DI's dishonesty is also a way to prepare for the film's most climactic moment. By purifying the atmosphere of falsehood, Herzog and Reichle can now proceed to unburden themselves of a terrible dark determinism rooted in the German experience of the Second World War.

The Drill Instructor's speech is followed by silence. Denis Reichle walks down a row of boys standing in formation dressed in full battle gear. The camera follows him from a low angle, showing that none of the boys even come up to his shoulders. Reichle asks a boy if he isn't afraid to die? The boy answers that he is not.

Reichle continues to address the camera in English. The children around him stand perfectly still, as if Reichle were not even there. The dim light of early morning adds to the gloom that Reichle begins to radiate. The effect is of a towering grey chimerical figure draping these boy soldiers with the shadow of his foreboding, as if the reaper himself hovered over this army of children, casting a shroud that only the camera sees. But Denis Reichle's shroud is one that he has worn for forty years. It was woven when Reichle was himself a soldier at the end of World War II.

The whole film, it now becomes clear, has been orchestrated to set up this final revelation by Reichle. His words draw a historical parallel between two very specific battlefields that by extension become all modern battlefields. The words also reveal why both Herzog and Reichle became interested in the Miskito child-soldiers. Reichle sees himself in these boys. Their experiences resonate with his own experiences in World War II, when the German army was so desperate for manpower that it drafted 15-year-olds, and finally, near the very end, even 14-year-olds. Denis Reichle, it seems, was one of them.

As Reichle surveys the Miskito boys, and tells his story to the camera in English, the uniformed children he is talking about do not understand a word. "It reminds me of a very sad story, when I myself was fourteen and was involved in Berlin and Germany in the last

hours of the last weeks of the fight against the Russians—and we believed it was to save the country. And many of us stayed there and died . . .

"It's a very sad moment what I see now. It reminds me too much of my childhood. In the age of thirteen, fourteen, if somebody tells you you're a man and you've got to fight for the country, you automatically believe it and you go. And that's what I see here again. It happened to us forty years ago; and it happens around the world—all over—every time. I can't put out of my mind when I see all these kids, that for me, I see them practically dead."

The film ends with a group of Miskito boys singing a song in Spanish. As the camera studies each one's face the song becomes a dirge sung by the already dead boy soldiers Reichle has summoned forth to escort these Miskito children to their graves.

Although Reichle consciously compares the Miskito boy soldiers of 1984 in Honduras with their German predecessors of 1945 in Berlin, he stops short with a melancholy statement about the sadness of it all. His sorrow, evoked by his foreknowledge of impending tragedy, is classical. For Reichle, the Miskito boys are doomed by the completion of a mystical circle they themselves will never be able to perceive.

The comparison between the two groups of doomed children touches on yet another theme. Reichle overtly complains about the psychological manipulation of the children, but when he generalizes and says that this has happened "around the world—all over—every time," it is a reference to the ontology of lost causes and predetermined outcomes, blurring the specific case of the Miskitos to make a bigger point. Not only are the Miskito boys fighting in the Nicaraguan civil war and the German boys who fought in WWII doomed, but all boys who have fought for all desperate lost causes throughout history share this doom.

The motif of boy soldiers sacrificing themselves for a lost cause has been effectively used in many films. In *The Bridge* (1959) Bernhard Wicki dedicated a whole film to the subject of German boys thrown into combat in WWII. One of the most spectacular scenes in *Doctor Zhivago* (1965) depicts the suicide charge of a White Russian cadet regiment. Several American films about the Civil War have shown similar scenes of Confederate cadets attacking Union forces and suffering heavy casualties.

In *Ballad of the Little Soldier* the broader identification of the Miskito cause with that of Germany in World War II increases the odds against the children, thereby cementing their doom. Reichle's knowledge of this inevitable outcome gives the film a special German quality which has been meticulously described by Saul Friedländer in *Reflections of Nazism: An Essay on Kitsch and Death* (New York: Harper & Row, 1984). Friedländer attacks the resurgence of Nazi themes in numerous films, including works by Fassbinder, Hans Jürgen Syberberg, and Liliana Cavani. One section is devoted to the evolution of a romantic motif particularly appealing to the Nazis: the cult of the young hero sacrificing himself for his country in the full bloom of innocence. Friedländer shows how this cult became an obsessive theme in films, songs, political rallies, and literature, until it finally became a reality.

"For the Nazis, this motif of death takes on a special dimension—urgent, essential, in some ways religious, mythical. This is an attraction for death in itself, as something elemental, opaque, intractable to analysis." (p. 42)

Taking a second look at the scene of Denis Reichle surveying the rows of Miskito boys standing in formation, one is reminded of another scene, shot during the spring of 1945 by a German news cameraman. The sequence was filmed to bolster the flagging spirits of a German nation on the verge of defeat. It was intended for newsreels, but has lived on to appear in several films and television programs about the Third Reich and WWII. It shows Adolf Hitler reviewing a row of child-soldiers who have distinguished themselves in battle.

Hitler walks along in his greatcoat. He asks questions. When one of the boys tells him how many Russian tanks he has destroyed, Hitler pins a medal to his chest, chuckling. He playfully, paternally slaps another boy on the cheek when the boy tells him that he is fourteen. Because the footage has appeared in so many documentaries, it is likely that either Herzog or Reichle, or both of them, are familiar with it.

In the best tradition of propaganda films,

the scene uses Hitler's paternal joviality to convey a voyeuristic fascination with the heroic feats and courage of the boys. It could easily be an item in Ripley's *Believe it or Not* series, or in a more recent American television series. "He knocked out six tanks—and he was only fourteen: *That's Incredible.*" Hitler's good humor in the scene successfully defuses the dark side of what is taking place, temporarily concealing the desperation that led to the drafting of the children. The magic of film transforms Hitler, the ogre actually consuming these children, into a proud father.

In the Honduran jungle, Denis Reichle plays out the same scene, but by concentrating on exactly those elements that Hitler so successfully downplayed in the film shot forty years earlier, Reichle draws attention to the horror of brainwashing young boys and sending them to their deaths. In a sense, he is Anti-Hitler come to atone in Central America for the sins of another war.

The hero's death cult is not the sole motif to surface in *Ballad of the Little Soldier* only to be demolished. The atrocity testimonials of war victims is another theme treated with far greater subtlety than in most documentaries.

Documentary audiences have become accustomed to seeing the victims of war describing horrible events. The atrocity testimonial is a staple of television news and documentary films to the extent that it is easy to see it coming and to accept it as part of the ritual that goes with watching documentaries—thereby tuning it out.

The atrocity testimonial interview has resurfaced with a vengeance in recent years, often becoming the backbone of documentaries about the various wars in Central America. The testimonial scenes in *Ballad of the Little Soldier* are not that different from those in other films—they generate sympathy for the victims of violence in the same ways. Herzog and Reichle use these interviews to show why the Misura army is able to recruit young boys. But then they undermine the thrust of their own material. Rather than making a blanket endorsement of the Misura army's actions and tactics, Herzog and Reichle instead stop to study the tragedy of the boy soldiers. It is an unprecedented act of sabotage for the documentary genre. The film-makers are obviously sympathetic to the plight of the Miskitos, believing that they have suffered terribly, but simply cannot bring themselves to endorse the military activity being shown. But if they are not trying to support the Miskito army in its war against the Sandinistas, as Ortiz charges, what are they doing?

Reichle's final words about the children being "practically dead" again contain the answer. The documentary is meant to make a more universal statement about archetypes and recurring tragedy. For Werner Herzog the Miskito struggle plays into two powerful archetypal images, both with long histories in western art.

The Biblical "Slaughter of the Innocents" has been a constantly recurring theme in European painting. It connotes helplessness in the face of pointless massacre. What could be closer to the children "shot just for fun," or to the people tied to a palm tree and decapitated with machetes? The only image with equal power in the arts is the depiction of the Indian Massacre.

In the iconography of the Americas, the Indian Massacre has in fact replaced the Slaughter of the Innocents. It is an essential outcome of every Indian insurrection recorded since the days of Bartolomé De Las Casas (1474–1566), the first European champion of Indian causes. Without the Indian Massacre there would be no melancholy to the works of James Fenimore Cooper, or to a thousand movies about the conquest of the Americas, most recently *Little Big Man*. Herzog has dealt with Indian insurrections before, in both *Aguirre* and *Fitzcarraldo*. He clearly regards the Miskitos as perennial victims of oppression, saying as much in his narration when he states that they know they will have to defend themselves regardless of who eventually succeeds the Sandinistas.

The Central American wars have yielded dozens of documentaries by foreign film-makers. In the best of the genre the film crew accompanies guerrillas, showing their lifestyles as well as some military action. They are often highly subjective and personally involving films that rarely attempt to feign objectivity—the result of a bond formed between the people being filmed and the film-makers, an intimacy bred of sharing danger.

Many of these films are really action-adventure pictures. The audience is keenly aware of the great risks taken by the film-makers. One

of the best examples of the genre is *In the Name of the People,* a 75-minute film by a team of Californians nominated for an Academy Award in 1985. It was shot largely by the late John Chapman, who made an avocation of courting danger from the moment he first began shooting 8mm film behind the lines during the Nicaraguan revolution in 1978. *In the Name of the People* is a sympathic portrait of guerrillas in El Salvador. It contains numerous interviews, a revolutionary marriage ritual, meals and songs in camp, marches through the jungle, testimonials to the brutality of the Salvadoran army, and a riveting combat sequence. The guerrillas are innovative and well-organized. They are also humane, spirited, fearless, and fighting a just war. Their enemies are evil.

The film-makers identify with the guerrillas and want us to like them. Ideology and propaganda statements are conveyed literally, without analysis. There is never a sour note. The good guys look too good.

In marked contrast, *Ballad of the Little Soldier,* while sympathizing with the Miskito Indians of Nicaragua, portrays the boy soldiers of the Misura army with gloomy pessimism. A commando raid disintegrates into a futile ordeal. Even when things could be dressed up, Herzog the film-maker intrudes on what the camera and tape recorder would present as factual to inform us that we are being deceived. The moment raises important questions about other films in which similar scenes may be presented at face value. Herzog could have allowed the DI's lie to pass unchallenged, but by exposing it he exposes the potential for documentary film to distort and deceive, striking a blow at an enormous weakness in a highly revered genre. This act, along with Reichle's concluding monologue, add dimensions that effectively block the possibility of any utopistic socialist vision of the future, laying the groundwork for a much darker vision. There is no imminent victory looming on the horizon, just death and an endless cycle of more death.

The real protagonist of *Ballad of the Little Soldier,* as in nearly all war documentaries, is the documentary film-maker. This film, like so many other Herzog films, is a narrative account of the film-makers' ordeal/adventure. The actual places, characters, and stories told are secondary to the fact that the documentarians were there, took the risks, and returned with the film as proof. Herzog has done this before, but by drawing attention to the process, as he does in *Ballad of the Little Soldier,* he implies that all such documentaries are first of all films about the experiences and conceptualizations of the film-maker. They are all home movies shot amidst exotic circumstances. As records of the film-maker's adventure, documentaries differ very little from fiction films.

In this context, *Ballad of the Little Soldier* is an anti-documentary, a violent guerrilla raid on the integrity of propaganda and news documentaries. With no program to support and no hope offered, the film is a nihilistic work threatening to all political sides and offering solace to none.

After hearing about *Ballad of the Little Soldier,* the Sandinista government invited Herzog to Nicaragua "to have a look at the Miskito problem from their side. I had the guarantee to go anywhere anytime without Sandinista forces around me," writes Herzog.* He accepted the invitation from Sergio Ramirez and Ernesto Cardenal, and took a print of the film with him.

"After the screening in Managua there was a very heated controversy (yet very respectful in tone) about the film, with . . . claims that all witnesses were paid imposters, but I believe that nobody really meant that seriously; the embarassment seemed to be too deep. Ernesto Cardenal, for example, admitted that the Sandinistas committed 'grave and dramatical mistakes' in the treatment of the Miskitos. The controversy focused more on the question, who might use the film for which purposes? I was told that the film was against the people of Nicaragua.

"There was no reconciliation in our viewpoints, but I am impressed how kind and civilized the Sandinistas treated me. In Argentina, a few years ago, I would have disappeared within hours."

While he was a guest of the Sandinistas Herzog travelled to the coast and tried to go back to the town of Haulover where he had shot scenes of the Misura army entering the village.

*Letter to George Csicsery by Werner Herzog (6/85).

"I asked to go there," he writes. "Out of coincidence, there was an attack by Misura forces on government troops just before I arrived. That gives me to think that the very moment the first soldier of the Sandinista government set his foot on the beach of Haulover, all 800 inhabitants fled into the jungle . . . And this is the same village I have seen together with Misura soldiers, where the people greeted them with songs, sympathy and confidence. This alone tells clearly enough that there must be something wrong about the government troops."

In the same letter Herzog takes a much more forgiving attitude than one would expect after seeing the film.

"It is my firm belief, based on first-hand observation, that most of the government soldiers are badly trained, badly equipped, in panic, and most of the time not really under military control and discipline. That does not mean that I am against the Sandinistas. Looking at the history of Nicaragua and looking at the needs and hopes of the people, one must be out of his mind if he does not see and feel the achievements of the Sandinista movement. I simply am not blind in the other eye."

The concluding statement in Herzog's letter reaffirms the metapolitical stance taken in *Ballad of the Little Soldier.* It is consistent with Herzog's statement that from the Miskito point of view the Sandinistas are a transient power, one of many in a long procession of governments which have ruled Nicaragua. "I hesitate to say too much about politics, about history, about ideology, about spheres of power, and zones of influence. My film is not a film against the Sandinistas, or anyone; it is a film with and for the Miskitos, and they have a voice in it."

Ballad of the Little Soldier (Ballade von kleinen Soldaten) (1984)
Directed by Werner Herzog and Denis Reichle; written by Herzog; cameramen Jorge Vignati and Michael Edols; edited by Maximiliane Mainka; produced by Werner Herzog Filmproduktion. 45 minutes.

BRIAN HENDERSON

Sturges at Work

Information newly available makes possible a close study of the development of the films of Preston Sturges from first note to release print.[1] Such a study reveals that the best-known features of Sturges's films—brilliant dialogue, break-neck pace, vivid characters—were in fact the result of tireless revision at every stage of production. The new information also reveals Sturges's interest in comic construction and indeed the dependence of dialogue, pacing, and characterization on the underlying construction of his films.

Sturges had been a Paramount screenwriter for three years, when that studio acceded to his much-repeated demand to direct. Between late September and late November of 1939, he rewrote his 1933 script *The Vagrant,* which he began filming in December as *Down Went McGinty,* later retitled *The Great McGinty* (1940). By the time Sturges left Paramount in December 1943, he had written and directed eight films. For reasons of space, I will pass over *The Great McGinty* and begin with Sturges's second Paramount film, *Christmas in July* (1940), which is probably his most underrated work.

Christmas in July shows Sturges's remarkable development as a screenwriter between the early thirites, when he began, and 1940. *Easy Living* (1937) aside, it is the first full-fledged instance of Sturges's kaleidoscopic comedy, with spiraling misunderstandings that increase steadily in intensity and ill consequences, and spread to more and more characters until its cataclysmic or muted end. *Christmas in July* has more characters, handled more adroitly, than any previous Sturges film. In the office, at Maxford House, in the department store, in the neighborhood—each sequence introduces a brace of new characters, without once slackening the pace or dropping the ball. As good as Sturges's direction of *The Great McGinty* was, his direction of *Christmas in July* was a giant step beyond it.

Underlying these features, making them possible, is the film's remarkable dramatic construction. This is Sturges's least-known virtue but one of his most important, and the one that gives the others their greatest effectiveness. Construction may be an elusive concept—the better it is the less one notices it. But a study of the revision process allows us to see it taking shape through several stages.

Christmas in July was based on Sturges's unproduced play of 1931, *A Cup of Coffee,* which concerns Jimmy MacDonald, a coffee salesman who wins a slogan contest sponsored by a rival company. Jimmy's affection for the company secretary (Tulip in the play; Betty in the film), provides romance, and the blusterings of the firm's founder and his two sons some characteristic Sturges satire of business. The play takes place entirely at E. Baxter & Sons coffee company in the course of one working day—there are three continuous acts and only two sets, one the interior of an office seen from the outside in the other.

In turning this slight play into a film script, Sturges decided to make new scenes, sometimes whole sequences, out of the implied events that circle around the office-bound events of the play. In the play, for instance, there are no scenes at the rival company (Maxford House), only a man who appears first at the end of Act I to tell Jimmy that he has won the contest, then again at the end of Act II to tell him there has been a mistake and he has not won, and finally at the end of Act III to tell him that he has won after all. For the film, Sturges invents a Maxford House radio program to announce the contest winner, and behind-the-scenes conflicts to explain not only its failure to do so but also, later, the mistaken award of the winner's check to Jimmy. The play's arbitrary reversals of fortune are replaced by office tricksters who send Jimmy a phony telegram that he has won. On this fallacious basis, Jimmy is offered a new job, a raise, and secretary by an impressed Mr. Baxter. Presents for the office staff arrive during Act II of the play—Jimmy bought them between Act I and Act II. However, the film devotes one sequence to Jimmy and Betty's buying presents in a department store—this time for all the people in their neighborhood—and another to their giving them to

Sturges directing CHRISTMAS IN JULY: *Jimmy's phony telegram. (Photos from* FIVE SCREENPLAYS BY PRESTON STURGES *[University of California Press, 1985])*

their neighbors, and the street party that results. The party is interrupted by the arrival of the department store owner, who has come to reclaim his goods, and of Dr. Maxford, who tears up Jimmy's check.

These new sequences are framed by sequences at Baxter Brothers that correspond to Acts II and III of the play. In Act II Jimmy is offered a new job on the basis of his contest victory; in Act III the truth comes out and he loses everything, until Tulip's plea wins him an opportunity to prove himself without guarantees. Sturges has essentially opened up a gap between Acts II and III of the play, into which he drops the new sequences at Maxford House, the department store, and Jimmy and Betty's neighborhood. The revelation that closes Act II—that Jimmy has not won the contest—is thus postponed by the film for three sequences, which amount to nearly half the film. That revelation, in both play and film, leads directly to the last act or sequence; to forestall the news that Jimmy has not won is to forestall the ending of the film. It is also to prolong Jimmy's state of illusion, at its ripest point, when he thinks he has attained everything he wants.

The play's audience knows only as much as Jimmy knows and at the same time that he knows it; it shares his adventures—victory, defeat, modified victory—on the same basis as he lives them. The film's audience, on the other hand, knows even before Jimmy receives it about the phony telegram sent by his officemates. (Their own later reactions to the snowballing effects of their gag become one more element of the film's complex drama.) Audience experience is thus split—the viewer simultaneously knows that Jimmy is heading for a fall and identifies with his illusion-based exultation. This is an excruciating tension—expertly prolonged and intensified by Sturges—which carries the young couple's dreams, and the audience's pleasure/unpleasure, to their farthest extent.*

In the play Jimmy and Tulip have known each other a few weeks and their relationship is uncertain—Jimmy seems unready for any kind of commitment. When he wins the contest he has a change of heart and asks Tulip to marry him. The film's cascade of events,

*This makes *Christmas in July,* among other things, a precursor of Sturges's later *Hail the Conquering Hero,* in which Woodrow's (and the audience's) dreams of heroism are carried to their limits and beyond—the fantasy gets out of hand even as it is occurring. There too the dreaded exposure of fraud, which is more ignominious than Jimmy's loss of the contest and reversion to clerkhood, is postponed by a series of increasingly manic scenes. (Woodrow, unlike Jimmy, knows that he is involved in a falsehood, which makes his burden of guilt and fear—and the audience's—far greater.)

however, has no room for a romantic complication—there are too many issues to resolve to pose a love issue also. So Sturges makes Jimmy and Betty a long-term couple, who lack only the funds to marry. This is a relationship built to withstand—and to motivate—the demands of the madly spiraling plot.

The two script versions for *Christmas in July* begin with the backstage scenes at Maxford House, then cut to Jimmy and Betty for their reactions and subsequent dialogue. However, the film begins with the couple listening to the radio, then cuts to Maxford House when its program comes on the air. Sturges invented some inconsequential dialogue for this new opening, but what Jimmy and Betty say is less important than the fact that the film begins with them. They are thereby made the center of the film, in relation to whom everything and everyone else in the film are to be evaluated and understood. To pick them up after the contest announcement makes them a function of the contest, rather than it a function of their situation. This also accords better with Jimmy's not winning the contest, as he does in the play, but only thinking he has. The emphasis is thus placed throughout on Jimmy and Betty's aspirations, rather than on a fortuitous contest victory. This makes them easy marks for the office tricksters but, by film's end, they have parlayed their delusion into an actual opportunity.

Finally, *Christmas in July* introduces those multi-character dialogues that are a feature of later films such as *The Palm Beach Story, The Miracle of Morgan's Creek,* and *Hail the Conquering Hero.* Similarly, the dialogues between Jimmy and Betty anticipate the intimate bickering of the lovers in those later films. Their exchange after the radio program takes up twelve script pages and is perhaps Sturges's finest achievement in sustained dialogue to that time. Jimmy and Betty ramble from topic to topic and are frequently irritated with one another, yet the flavor of their interaction and the essential points of their background, characters, and dreams are effectively conveyed.

The Lady Eve (1941) underwent, in the whole course of its revision, transformations at least as great as those of *Christmas in July.* Rather than deal with such overall changes again, however, I will concentrate instead on the successive changes in one segment of *Eve* only. This will emphasize in a different way the extreme care that Sturges took with his scripts, both in the minuteness of his attention and in the persistence of his revisions through every stage of a film's making. It will also emphasize the remarkable integration of his comic dramas, wherein changes in one passage reverberate through the entire film.

In 1938, Paramount producer Albert Lewin asked Sturges to write a screenplay based upon "Two Bad Hats," a Monkton Hoffe story that had been adapted by Jeanne Bartlett in a "synopsis" dated February 12, 1938. Sturges's actual screenplay, written in late 1938, owed so little to the stories on which it was based that Lewin asked him to return to the original in his rewrites. The result of this disagreement was the indefinite postponement of the project, while Sturges went on to write another script for Lewin, *Remember the Night* (1940).

Sturges returned to *Eve* in 1940, by which time *The Great McGinty* had been a great critical and solid commercial success and *Christmas in July* was about to be. Free to do what he wanted with his old screenplay, within the bounds of censorship, Sturges chose to rewrite it extensively. Beginning in late August 1940, he finished a revised screenplay, called *The Lady Eve,* by October 7. Further changes were realized in an October 18 script, which was the shooting script; others were made during the shooting process and, in one important instance, in the editing of the film.

Lewin had criticized the coming together of Eve and Charles as "all too easy," even though such meetings are part of the appealing fantasy of screwball comedy. In any case, Sturges never altered this aspect of the story except to improve the dialogue, from the 1938 script to the finished film. What took him much longer to resolve were the reasons for their breaking up and the right mode of its presentation.

The romance of Jean and Charles takes place over three days. On the first day Jean trips Charles, they go to her cabin for a new pair of shoes, and play cards with her father. Later there is the scene with the snake in Charles's cabin, and the long dialogue on the chaise-longue in Jean's cabin. This sequence

of events remains constant from the 1938 script to the film itself. What does change from version to version, to be finally resolved only in the film itself, is the sequence of events on the second and third days. On the second day, the romance between Charles and Jean reaches its peak, and they make plans for the future; on the third day they part. What happens on the second day, the exact order and nature of its events, determines the nature of the third day's parting and that, in turn, determines the nature of the second half of the film —Jean's revenge—and hence the exact relationship between the two parts of the film.

The events of the second and third days are treated differently in each script version. In the 1938 script, Charles takes Eve all over the ship in an attempt to tell her that he loves her but she cannot hear him because of the engine noise. Nevertheless she gets the message and as a result asks her father not to cheat Charles that evening, which he ignores. Charles is called out after Eve's father pretends to tear up his check and the purser shows him a police photo of Eve and her father. Charles and Eve spend a romantic evening together but when they rejoin the next morning, he is looking at the photograph. Charles tells her "harshly" that the photo arrived the night before, and Eve says, "Then you knew who we were . . . before you told me you loved me," and leaves.

The October 7 script introduces a scene between Jean and Charles on the bow of the ship "against a magnificent sunset," in which he gives his long "I've always loved you" speech. (This replaces the journey-through-the-ship gag and is an important stage in the gradually increasing seriousness of the Jean–Charles romance.) The rest of the second day's events are as before, but the third day's parting scene is now softer in tone—regretful as much as accusatory. Charles confesses somewhat sadly that he received the photo the night before; Jean asks why he did not tell her then, and Charles asks why she did not tell him (that she was a crook) when he said he loved her and asked her to marry him. Jean says she was going to tell him before they married—he must believe that. Charles says he does not know what to think. Jean says, "You wanted to hurt me . . . and make me feel cheap . . . when you knew you didn't want to marry me any more." Charles replies that he will marry Jean if she wishes, but she says he must feel proud of himself and leaves.

Sturges the busy screenwriter—typing, smoking and phoning all at the same time.

The October 18 script begins the second day with Charles and Eve having breakfast together, as in the other versions, and follows this first with the scene in which Jean tells her father not to cheat Charles, and then with the card game itself. This time, however, Charles is not called away from the table and does not see the photo of Jean and her father. Instead he meets Jean on deck, goes with her to the bow of the boat, and makes his "I've always loved you" speech, which is now the peak of their romantic evening. The next morning Jean tells her father that she plans to marry Charles, and he asks her not to tell Charles "who we are" until they are off the boat. Jean agrees "after a slight pause" and goes off to meet Charles. (This is a new scene in this version, obviously designed to show that Jean intends to tell Charles the truth about herself, and to provide one of the reasons why she has not done so already.) While Charles waits for Jean on deck, Muggsy brings the purser, who shows Charles the photo. In the scene with Jean that follows, he tells her that he had known who she was the night before. In the October 18 script, for the first time, this is a lie; Charles is trying to hurt Jean and, although she says she does not believe him, she is hurt at the possibility that it is so and at his intention to hurt her. This provides a motivation for her revenge in the

second part of the film that is far subtler than it was in the earlier versions. It also implies, and helps create, a more intimate and intense love relation between Jean and Charles, wherein the pretense of betrayal is as wounding as betrayal itself.

Lewin had touched a sore point in the 1938 script when he criticized the fact that Eve does not tell Charles that she is a crook and he "embraces" her in full knowledge that she is one. It seems true that Charles cannot "embrace" Jean with this knowledge and still retain our sympathy—the screwball genre would also be violated if this occurred. It is fascinating, however, that Sturges did not change either of these crucial matters in the nearly two years from the 1938 script to the October 7 script, but changed both in the eleven days that followed.

The film itself smoothes the transitions between scenes—a good-bye scene after the couple breakfasts together is eliminated—but otherwise adheres to the final script's scheme. The most important change from script to film concerns a scene in which Charles and Jean meet at his New York bank as she tries to cash the palmed check. This scene was shot but eliminated later in the editing. In the 1938 and October 7 scripts, the bank scene follows Charles's confession that he knew Jean was a crook during their romantic evening together. In the October 18 script, the bank scene follows Charles's false confession that he knew. In the film itself, Charles's confession is false and the bank scene that was to follow it is cut.

In itself, the bank scene is ambiguous. In the 1938 and October 7 scripts, Charles's knowing about Jean before their romantic evening fully motivates her revenge. In both cases, the bank scene might have developed sympathy for Charles by showing him miserable. But when, in the October 18 script, Charles acts in good faith on their romantic evening—even though he lies about it the next day—Jean's revenge might seem excessive. The bank scene might then serve to reinforce Jean's revenge drive by presenting Charles as condescending or to otherwise emphasize the social distance between them. On the other hand, the sadness of the scene might undermine Jean's revenge drive. What all of this suggests is that how the bank scene was played would determine its meaning in

THE LADY EVE: *The missing bank scene.*

itself and its impact on the film as a whole. Since the scene did not survive and since, as written, it seems to cut in several directions at once, it is difficult to assess the scene's final omission.

The film's preservation of Charles's good faith from the October 18 script, combined with its cutting the bank scene present in all previous versions, poses a new context for regarding Jean's revenge. It also displaces the problem of direction backwards. Without the bank scene, our last view of the lovers is the disembarkation scene, which is played with complete seriousness. Sturges cuts back and forth between two groups. Charles never once looks over at the other group, Muggsy looks over once. The coldness of recently fiery emotions is realized with great restraint by what the characters do not do, which is to acknowledge the existence of the other. Stanwyck in her travelling outfit is already an elegant hunter, her hatred hidden beneath an icy exterior. The scene does not supply, it stands in for the excised, rationalized "motivations" of all previous versions. It thereby locates the spring of Jean's later actions in a somewhat obscure but powerful realm of interior feeling. The scene thus presents the non-laughing other side of screwball comedy's battle of the sexes. Perhaps this accounts in part for the enduring power of the film.

Sturges's films in the forties resemble Godard's films in the sixties in at least one respect —each may plausibly be regarded as a turning point in its maker's career, summing up the discoveries of prior work and making possible later developments. It is possible to argue,

nevertheless, that *Sullivan's Travels* (1941) holds a special place among Sturges's turning points because of the work methods that produced it and the new kinds of comic structure, and humor, that it introduced. *The Palm Beach Story* (1942) and *The Miracle of Morgan's Creek* (1944), which exploit and extend the new terrain opened up by *Sullivan,* will also be considered in this section.

The Great McGinty, Christmas in July, and *The Lady Eve* had all been rewritten from scripts originally written years earlier. *Sullivan* is the first Sturges script not based upon an earlier script, but conceived and written from first to last in the period immediately prior to its filming. This was also to be Sturges's method of composition for the films that followed *Sullivan: The Palm Beach Story, The Miracle of Morgan's Creek* and *Hail the Conquering Hero* (1944). (*The Great Moment* [1944] was adapted from an earlier script.)

Sturges's first impulse after completing *The Lady Eve* had been to rewrite his 1935 script, *Song of Joy,* a stinging satire of Hollywood. He submitted it late in 1940 to Twentieth Century-Fox, to whom he owed a picture in exchange for Henry Fonda's participation in *Eve.* Fox's Darryl Zanuck rejected *Song of Joy,* however, as "something out of Preston's trunk"—not realizing that all three of Sturges's prior hits had been based on "trunk items," or that Sturges had in each case so thoroughly overhauled the earlier project as to make it something new.

When Paramount also refused *Song of Joy,* Sturges embarked on *Sullivan,* beginning its script on February 3, 1941. The commercial and critical success of *Eve,* released later that month, put Sturges in a stronger position than he had previously enjoyed, and enabled him, within the limits of commerce and censorship, to make what he wanted to make. This freedom was not immediately affected by a change in the Paramount hierarchy that was to prove momentous for Sturges in the long run: William LeBaron left Paramount for Fox in February 1941 and was replaced by B. G. "Buddy" DeSylva. In March 1941, as a favor to DeSylva, Sturges wrote and directed a new ending for *New York Town* (1941), a Paramount film in trouble. Despite interruptions, Sturges worked steadily on *Sullivan,* beginning with the first sequence and proceeding in order to the last, and finished it on April 22. A May 3rd script contained responses to censorship points raised by the Hays Office and some other changes, relatively minor, of Sturges's own. Other changes were made during the shooting of the film, which took place from May 7 to early July 1941, and in the editing which followed soon after.

Sturges's earlier scripts and films had also undergone extensive revision in the later stages of their production. What is new in *Sullivan* are the circumstances under which Sturges wrote what we might call the first final script, the version which was the basis for subsequent revisions at all stages. It took approximately six months from the first conception of *Sullivan* to its final editing, which is about how long it had taken Sturges to revise the scripts for and to film each of his first three films. Quantitatively speaking, Sturges's scripts prior to *Sullivan* had received more time and attention than it did, and also had the benefit of two perspectives, since they had each been written at one period and rewritten at another. As a result, however, each of those scripts had one foot in an earlier era; *Sullivan* and the films that followed it were able to leap free into new realms of comic drama.

Sullivan differs from the earlier films in a number of other ways. For one thing, it has eleven sequences, an unusually high number for a Sturges script, reflecting the story's picaresque subject. *Sullivan* is a journey film and, as such, is far more episodic than anything Sturges had done before. Like Cervantes's *Don Quixote,* Ibsen's *Peer Gynt,* or Feuillade's serials, *Sullivan* could, in principle, go on forever. Indeed *Sullivan* renews one's sense of film's narrative power and its capacity for a virtually unlimited variety of scenes and moods. It is also filled with references to and reflections on cinema in general and Hollywood in particular. One might say that Sturges the dramatist dominated his thirties scripts and his first three films as writer-director, but with *Sullivan* he discovers cinema and revels in it.

The other side of the picture is that *Sullivan* lacks the narrative cohesion and the tightly integrated dramatic structure of his first three films, particularly *Christmas in July* and *Eve.* The Miz Zeffie sequence is an example. On his

first journey, Sullivan ends up doing yard work for a lecherous country widow and her sister; later he goes to the movies with them, avoids the widow's advances, and escapes out of a window. The entire sequence, including many jokes about the widow's dead husband, has little connection to the rest of the film. Its beginning serves to get Sullivan away from the studio crowd and its ending sets up his meeting the girl in the diner—when he hitches a ride that takes him, unknowingly, back to Hollywood—but many other kinds of sequence would have served these functions as well. No scene, let alone entire sequence, in *Christmas in July* or *Eve* is comparably as flat in itself or irrelevant to the film as a whole. Each scene, and no other, seems necessary in those films.

It has often been said—Agee was the first—that Sturges mixed the verbal humor of the sound era with the slapstick techniques of silent comedy. *Sullivan* is often cited as typical of this mixture or even its best example, but it appears to me neither typical nor the best. Its slapstick passages often seem heavily applied and somewhat arbitrarily inserted for overtly "rhythmic" considerations—periodically to liven up a conceit that might be regarded by audiences as too intellectual or satiric. The slapstick elements in Sturges's other Paramount films are expertly built up to and descended from, and dramatically prepared and placed so as to release tensions at exactly those points where they have crystallized. Because *Sullivan* is episodic rather than dramatic, the slapstick passages do not grow out of the dramatic process; they only alternate as autonomous passages with the verbal passages.

The flaws in *Sullivan,* however, go hand in hand with what is new in the film, including many kinds of scenes and humor that the earlier films did not permit. Take for instance *Sullivan*'s uncharacteristic treatment of some of its character actors, notably the studio employees ordered to follow Sullivan on his journey. These "eight stooges," as one of their number calls them, include some of Sturges's most distinctive supporting players—William Demarest, Frank Moran, Torben Meyer, Charles Moore, and Vic Potel. In the earlier films each would have had one or more "star turns" and been given distinctive dialogue to speak throughout. Here the studio people are introduced all at once—a squabbling gaggle—and are never much differentiated at any later point. The impression they give, in fact, is that of a *Mad Magazine* cluster of press agents, chauffeurs, photographers, doctors, radiomen, and secretaries. Even the way the secretary's underwear shows in her ungainly sprawls in the tank-yacht chase has a *Mad* aspect. This is only one respect in which *Sullivan* is ahead of its time, opening the way not only to the free-wheeling style of Sturges's own later comedies, but to much of the best postwar comedy as well, including the cartoon-style of Frank Tashlin and the bold departures from narrative of Jerry Lewis (*The Bellboy, The Errand Boy*). Equally ahead of its time is the boy whippet-tank commander who gets Sullivan away from the studio crowd. He is the infernal child of the day's technology, not only abreast of it but coequal with it, and therefore a monster. He walks from *Sullivan's Travels,* by way of *Mad* and the *National Lampoon,* into *The Loved One* (1965), by which time the speed-demon driver has become a homemade-rocket engineer (Paul Williams).

These cartoon effects and the other exaggerations of *Sullivan* imply a greater distance from its characters and plot than we find in the earlier films, and this affects the film's romantic story line as well. *Eve* and *Sullivan,* made back-to-back, are a natural pair for comparison on this point, even though they seem to belong to different universes of cinema. We have traced Sturges's careful rewriting of the Charles-Jean romance in *Eve,* and the increasing seriousness of the affair that resulted. Without ceasing to be a comedy, the film treats the romance with surprising tenderness: its inner dimension is emphasized as much as its social and satirical aspect. None of this is true of the romance in *Sullivan,* which seems arbitrary and not very believable by comparison. The affections of The Girl—she has no other name in script or film—seem puppyish, and Sullivan stolidly refuses them until his unlikely marriage proposal, shouted in a hectic crowd scene, at the end of the film. It was said of Sturges in the thirties that he could not write a good love scene. There are exceptions to this, but the tender emotions of romantic scenes and the logic of romantic

Sturges directing Veronica Lake in SULLIVAN'S TRAVELS.

situations did, perhaps, come hard to him. The romantic sections of *Sullivan* were written once and not much changed subsequently. Perhaps when Sturges had less time—and wrote more freely?—the result was a far more externalized, even cartooned version of romance; or simply a posited or conventional romantic attachment, usually ridiculed in one way or other. (Buster Keaton, like Sturges a non-sentimentalist, also resorted to cartoon—*Seven Changes*—or parodied convention—*Sherlock Jr.* and many other films—in presenting the obligatory romance.)

Transitional works such as *Sullivan's Travels* often reveal tensions and difficulties. Its episodic, and to some degree unconnected, narrative form and its treatment of some of its characters indicate the transitional nature of the film. From the perspective of the earlier films, it represents a falling off in dramatic-narrative cohesion, in character differentiation, perhaps even in dialogue. From the perspective of later Sturges and, indeed, of later comedy, these "failures" are the portals to a new kind of comedy—to structures and effects that could not have been achieved within Sturges's older, "classical" forms.

The Palm Beach Story, one of Sturges's most delightful films, is the complete antithesis of "the well-made play," or screenplay, but achieves cohesion on the new ground that *Sullivan's Travels* opened up but did not master, stranded as it was between old and new modes, the "well-made" tradition and its modern opposite. *The Palm Beach Story* goes all the way over to the side of disintegration—it seems to be simultaneously falling apart and reinventing itself continually.

The Palm Beach Story is also a picaresque, a kind of female version of *Sullivan's Travels.* Here it is Gerry who sets out on a journey, meets a variety of strange characters, and has a number of diverse adventures. Perhaps it is Sturges's *Juliet of the Spirits* following his *8½,* an attempt to redo an earlier film in the register of another gender. If *Sullivan's Travels* is no match for *8½, The Palm Beach Story* is much better than *Juliet.* Sullivan is rendered externally, unlike Fellini's Guido, and as a result we do not take him seriously as an artist. But Fellini fails to render Juliet's inner life, or to connect it meaningfully to her outer life, whereas Sturges's exterior view of Gerry's adventures in a male-dominated society opens up a rich field of trenchant observation.

Sturges wrote the script from early September to early November 1941, calling it first *Is Marriage Necessary?,* which was rejected by the Breen Office, then *Is That Bad?,* and finally *The Palm Beach Story.* Shooting took place between late November 1941 and late January 1942. Comparing the February 7 dialogue continuity to the script shows very little change—less than that between the final script and film of any other Sturges film. In its work methods and in its structure, *The Palm Beach Story* confirms, and fulfills, the directions initiated by *Sullivan's Travels.*

Nearly all of Sturges's early work on the script had to do with its central premise—exactly what circumstances are to set Gerry off on her journey? Sturges never required half a film, as many directors did, to elaborate its premise. He established his premises and exploded them into action practically at the same time—usually in the first scene. *Sullivan's* opening is perhaps the best example—when the fast talk between Sullivan and the producers is over, he is already on his way.

In Sturges's initial version of the opening scene of *The Palm Beach Story,* Gerry "muffs the breakfast" one morning in the suburban house she shares with her husband Tom, burning the toast, breaking the cream bottle, and letting the coffee boil over. The burnt coffee smell wakes Tom "who departs minus breakfast and half dressed for the commmuter train which he misses." Tom comes back to tell his wife off and in so doing misses the second train. He catches the third train but arrives late for work and is fired. When he

returns home that night, Gerry tells him she is no good for him and, besides, they don't love each other any more. She then kisses him passionately, which only irritates him under the circumstances. She says, "You'll see, some men would give their life for that," and they are off on a long dialogue that moves toward her actually leaving. Sturges does not quite get to that point in his early drafts—he is still working out the reasons, short term and long term, for her departure.

Sturges devoted several weeks to reworking the film's opening scene, moving gradually toward the version that appears in the script and the film. In this film and in *Sullivan's Travels,* Sturges seemed to need to get the premise of the film, embodied in its first scene, exactly right, so that everything else would flow logically from it—if not inevitably, at least plausibly. The opening scenes of these films launch the main character on his or her journey. Sturges did not have time for comprehensive rewrites of the scripts for *Sullivan* and the later films. Perhaps he felt that if he got the premise of the film right, it would suffice to write the basic script in one draft and polish it in the censorship, shooting, and editing stages. That, in any case, is how he most often proceeded after *Sullivan.*

The film's opening sequence alters Sturges's early versions of it considerably, but does an admirable job of establishing the premise and setting the plot in motion. We see Tom try to sell a crackpot invention—we know immediately he's a failure—while Gerry is being given $700 by a rich old man called the "Weenie King," who is looking at the apartment that she and Tom can no longer afford. She pays their bills with the money and takes Tom out to dinner with the change. Then, when they are at least for the moment free and clear, she acts on her apparently long-held conviction to leave the marriage, for Tom's sake as much as her own. She backslides enough to spend the night with her huband—we know from this that they still love each other—but still leaves him the next morning. This amusing opening launches the film in a surprisingly sturdy manner. No opening could logically prepare the later events of the film—the appearance of the Ale and Quail Society, for example. This is one difference between Sturges's early and late films. The trick instead was to launch Gerry's journey so surely that the film would withstand all manner of later digressions and interruptions, and this it does.

Sturges finished shooting *Palm Beach* in late January 1942 and its editing soon after. Now his own producer, he chose to film next *Triumph Over Pain,* a biographical and mainly non-comic script that he had written in 1939 about the dentist who allegedly first used ether. He quickly revised the script in February and March, shot the film in April and May, and had a fully edited version by July—less than six months overall. Buddy DeSylva opposed the project from the beginning—he loathed its title and subject and found its complex flashback structure incomprehensible. He had the film recut and, after Sturges had left the studio, released it in 1944 as *The Great Moment.* By no means Sturges's best script, *Triumph Over Pain*—and what Paramount's cutters did to the film based on it—nevertheless deserves close study, a process that cannot be started here.

The enmity that Sturges incurred with *Triumph Over Pain* cast a shadow over the making of his next (and last) films for Paramount, *The Miracle of Morgan's Creek* (1944) and *Hail the Conquering Hero* (1944). That Sturges embarked on *Morgan's Creek* under these circumstances was a bold maneuver indeed. James Curtis remarks: "For a more timid soul, it would be time to fall back to safer, more proven territory, to 'run for cover.' [Instead] he chose to write a story that no reasonable man could expect to film unhindered."[2] To begin the project, Sturges wrote an undated two-page plot outline of *Morgan's Creek,* an "original story" which Paramount approved for development into a shooting script; he followed a similar procedure for *Hero.* Before *Triumph Over Pain,* no story summaries had been required for Sturges's scripts—production approval was apparently given rather casually.

In all, Sturges wrote four script versions of *Morgan's Creek,* only one of which is complete. The first, comprising work from September 10 to October 1, ends with a brief version of Norval's arrest after he and Trudy attempt to get married under assumed names.

The second, dated October 8–10, is no more than the first version with a recast and much expanded version of the attempted wedding and the uproar, now huge, that follows it. From October 14 to 19, Sturges launched a third version that got only as far as the middle of the marriage scene. This version responded to memos from Luigi Luraschi, Paramount's in-house censorship expert, but it by no means settled Sturges's problems with the censors. On the 21st, the day shooting began, Joseph Breen sent a seven-page, single-spaced letter detailing Hays Office objections to the second script version: Trudy must not be shown drunk on her night out with the soldiers; her pregnancy must be touched upon lightly; much of the doctor's and the lawyer's dialogue must be cut and a scene in church completely removed; etc. On the same day, De Sylva sent Sturges a blunt memo insisting that Trudy be hit on the head rather than shown, or implied, as drunk. On October 27, Luraschi reported to Sturges the Hays Office's objections to the third script version—fewer than there had been to the second but still requiring immediate attention. At this point the script was still far from finished. Meanwhile, the actual filming of *Morgan's Creek* was also being monitored; Luraschi wrote Sturges on the 28th: "We have seen today's rushes and wish to call your attention to the screeching of the tires. In view of the Government's rubber conservation program, it will be necessary to eliminate this screeching when dubbing."

Additional memos followed almost daily—one has the sense that Paramount censorship and the Hays Office were working full-time on *Morgan's Creek*. Agee's remark that the censors were raped in their sleep by the film is thus incorrect: they may have been raped, ultimately, but they were not sleeping. They were defeated less by Sturges perhaps than by their own certainty that meanings can be policed.

The final script was finished on December 10, just eighteen days before the end of shooting. This remarkable document, a kind of palimpsest, contains some pages from the October 14–19 version, interspersed with later replacement pages, and new passages—including a prologue reviving the Governor and the Boss from *The Great McGinty,* which was added in late November—and a conclusion, including a return to McGinty and the Boss, which was added in December. Censorship objections kept pace with Sturges's progress on the script, even in its final stages. Thus a November 24 memo demands some changes in the prologue, a December 1 memo requires a dialogue change, etc.

The result of this conflict-ridden gestation is perhaps the most outrageous comedy ever made in Hollywood, a genuinely black comedy, worthy to stand with Faulkner's *Sanctuary* and Nathaniel West's *The Dream Life of Balso Snell, Miss Lonelyhearts, A Cool Million,* and *Day of the Locust.* André Bazin says correctly, "Sturges delights in forcing upon his characters—who are totally unfit to deal with these situations—the entire weight of the prejudices, social conventions, and social imperatives that could exist in a small American town in wartime."[3] More disturbing, however, is the fact that Trudy and Norval seem unprepared for life itself. Adulthood seems hopelessly beyond them, and there are no models or traditions in view to help them.

In regard to structure and tone, *Morgan's Creek* reflects the lessons of *Sullivan* and *Palm Beach* and applies them in new ways. *Sullivan* introduced new kinds of comedy and comic characterization at the edges of Sullivan's journey, as certain of those who accompany him and others whom he meets on the way. The new characters stand alongside more traditional Sturges figures such as The Girl, Sullivan's butler and valet, the producers, etc. *Palm Beach* intensifies this tendency. All the characters whom Gerry meets along her way —the Weenie King, the Ale and Quail Society, John D. Hackensacker, the Princess, Toto—are living cartoons. Still, Gerry and Tom, or at least their love for each other, are presented seriously. (The film's surrealist framing footage, however, puts the plot as a whole, including their relationship, in brackets.) In *Morgan's Creek* the cartoon stylization reaches to the heart of the film. It is now the main characters themselves, played by Eddie Bracken and Betty Hutton, who are cartoons.* Placing such characters at the center of the work, however, obliges Sturges to take them seriously—a paradox, but one that became fun-

*The other characters in *Morgan's Creek* are much less cartoonish than the principals.

damental to comic art in the postwar period —Heller, Southern, Kubrick, etc. However, the cartoon status of the characters in these works is not only a new mode of rendering but also a reflection of those gigantic social forces—determining and stereotyping our lives—that were brought into being by the total mobilization for World War II and that persist in the postwar period.

Hail the Conquering Hero may seem like a continuation of *Morgan's Creek*. Both films are set in small towns—indeed they were shot on the same set. Eddie Bracken plays the hapless lead in each—Norval is 4-F, Woodrow is discharged from the service after a few months for hayfever. However, the films and their characters are quite different. Woodrow is nowhere nearly the cartoon figure that Norval was. His first-sequence monologue on the history of the Marines—shot in close-up—cues us to take him seriously, as do the Marines, the townspeople, his mother, and Libby, his girl friend. Libby herself is earnest, intelligent, and articulate, not the cartoon character that Trudy was.

Satirizing the subject of heroism in wartime in any case required special care. The Marines could not be cartooned—even crazy Bugsy is a good guy—and their campaign to help Woodrow, however casually begun, had to be crowned with success. The irony of Woodrow's election as mayor lies at a deeper, far more ambiguous, level of textuality than Norval's ascendancy to national prominence, which is a cruel joke on him and a comment on the inanity of success and failure in America. Woodrow's election, on the contrary, is necessary to balance his father's sacrifice in World War I. (*Hero*'s pattern of justice fulfilling itself in a later generation connects it to certain Shakespeare plays and indeed to Greek drama.)

Next to his dialogue, Sturges is probably best known for the breathless pace of his films, and *Hero* has, arguably, the best pacing (and possibly the best dialogue) of any Sturges film.* It is also the best-constructed. This combination is not surprising since pace, like dialogue, depends ultimately upon construction. Sturges's revisions of his scripts and films show the interdependence of these factors—a change in one inevitably affected the others. He was particularly adept at finding new balances among them as he improved one or the other from version to version. The remarkable headlong pace of *Hero,* its hurtling forward through spiraling misunderstandings, is the result of revisions and cuts, many quite small, at each stage of its making.

Sturges's first note on *Hero* is a two-page story idea dated May 29, 1943. On June 11 he submitted to Paramount a thirteen-page "original story" called *Hail the Conquering Hero,* which was promptly approved for production. The screenplay itself was finished by July 12, and shooting took place between mid-July and mid-September. The dialogue continuity of September 20 shows that Sturges stayed quite close to the script. From this point the fate of the film becomes mysterious. On the basis of mixed audience response at December previews, production chief Buddy DeSylva threatened cuts and retakes, as he had already done with the unreleased *Great Without Glory*. Sturges's contract expired on December 10. In contract negotiations he demanded more control of his films, and when Paramount refused he left the studio with three films unreleased.

Morgan's Creek was a huge success upon its release in January 1944, but the recut *Hero* displeased preview audiences in February. Thus Sturges got a second chance to put *Hero* back together and, indeed, to improve it. In March and April, unpaid, he wrote and shot a new ending for the film and undid the damage that the Paramount editors had done. In August the film was released. We know by comparing the September 1943 dialogue continuity with the released film that Sturges made changes in other parts of the film besides the ending, notably in the kaleidoscopic

*What is pace in film? It cannot be defined abstractly because it is not an independent quality—pace is always the pace of something. The most effective pacing is that most appropriate to the something in question. Perhaps the best general treatment of the subject is Eisenstein's discussion of metric, rhythmic, and tonal montage is "A Dialectical Approach to Film Form." Eisenstein demonstrates, in Hegelian manner, that length of shot, movement from shot to shot, and the dominant theme or quality of the passage as a whole are not only intertwined as categories but thoroughly dependent on the subject in question. The what and the how are two aspects of the same thing.

reception sequence. He also eliminated some small scenes, some speeches, and a fair amount of incidental dialogue throughout the film. These changes, while extensive, are of a particularly intimate or "internal" sort. They do not take the film in a new direction but they quicken its rhythms and sharpen its focus. Perfecting what was already a remarkable dramatic and cinematic structure, these changes make *Hero* what many regard as Sturges's best film.

Hero's opening sequence, which brings Woodrow and the six Marines together, begins quite slowly, helping to creat the sense of a chance meeting. The rest of the film, which develops the consequences of this meeting, is a mad rush, what one of the characters calls a "snowslide." What might be called the snowslide principle in fact governs the script's revisions of the story, the film's revisions of the script, and the revised conclusion of script and film.

The script's reception sequence cuts from Woodrow and the Marines on the train to a kaleidoscopic series of scenes of the townspeople waiting for Woodrow. This ten-page interlude allows Sturges to introduce an entire network of relationships—romantic, familial, and political—that Woodrow will step into and affect. Woodrow will bounce like a ball among the individuals and groups gathered at the station and we must know who they are before the process can begin.

The reception sequence is such a tour de force that it threatens to stop the film, or at least the snowslide, but Sturges expertly keeps the momentum going in a number of ways. For one thing, he makes the reception ceremony itself quite brief—much of the script's dialogue for the scene is either cut or drowned out by the crowd and band noise. Also omitted is a brief scene in the back of a car between Woodrow and Libby, the girl he left behind, in which she says twice to a distracted Woodrow that she has something to tell him. Getting only a blank "What?" in response, she says she will tell him later. Why doesn't she just tell him then and there that she is now engaged to the mayor's son? There are reasons why she does not do so, but spelling them out at this early point in the film would be awkward. Far better, as the released film has it, that she genuinely try again and again to tell

Sturges directing Eddie Bracken in HAIL THE CONQUERING HERO.

Woodrow the news, only to be foiled each time by the cascade of events engulfing him—each of which also adds to the difficulty of her task and to the process that finally convinces her to change her mind.

Sturges also keeps the momentum going by eliminating wherever he can the transition shots and scene-setting shots specified by the script. This serves the snowslide principle by hurtling the action constantly forward without interval or break. Also, by cutting directly to scenes, often already in progress, without separately introducing their exterior, or even interior, settings, Sturges assumes and thereby strongly suggests our familiarity with them in advance—railroad station, church, mayor's office, auditorium. This increases our participation in Woodrow's and the town's dilemmas and, from Woodrow's perspective, turns the film's action into a nightmarish phenomenology of horrible events streaming by without transitions, separations, or scene-settings.

Sturges's new ending for the film smooths out the chronology of events in a number of ways and supplies a conclusion that sustains the intensity of the rest of the revised film. It avoids in particular the script's anticlimactic scenes that show the mayoral campaign and election (and the Marine farewell after that). The new ending simply eliminates them, while making it clear that Woodrow will win the election. Whereas the script's climax took place on the Truesmith front porch, the new ending has Woodrow and Libby pack and go to the train station with five of the Marines. It is here that the town, led by Sgt. Heffelfinger, confronts Woodrow and asks him to run for mayor even though he is not a hero. The train arrives and the six Marines board it

and leave. So the new ending tops the emotional scene in which the townspeople ask Woodrow to run for mayor with the equally emotional farewell to the Marines. It thus compresses the two climaxes into one final train station scene, and thereby achieves symmetry with the reception sequence as well as considerable dramatic acceleration. The snowslide principle is sustained to the very end of the film.

Hero's revision process also transforms the central relationships between Woodrow and Libby and between Woodrow and the Sergeant. These changes affect the film's pace in a more subtle way than those discussed above.

The script and film reinvent the story's Libby—she now links the two families (the Nobles and the Truesmiths), their two spaces, the two candidates for mayor, and the two young men. The extended drama of her choice between these groups, and her physical movements between their respective spaces constitute a focus for the film second in importance only to Woodrow's own dilemma. The story's Libby has remained true-blue so that there is nothing for her to do but to ask Woodrow why he has not kissed her and whether he is still in love with her, and to show her loyalty when he is exposed as a fraud. The Libby of the script and film is a far more complex character and a dynamic link between the two stories.

The story's Woodrow talks with the Sergeant in the saloon, then argues with him on the train and in his room while he is changing out of his uniform and also at the end of the day when the Marines put him to bed. In the screenplay, Sturges greatly expands the number of scenes between them and the amount of dialogue they speak. Sturges also spreads their encounters throughout the film so that they become, in effect, a single, long, interrupted dialogue. In scene after scene, indeed, Woodrow and the Sergeant start talking to each other as though continuing a conversation rather than beginning one. (This is one of the secrets of Sturges's superb dialogue generally, although it is rarely—if ever—carried throughout an entire film as here.) Their exchanges also comment on each stage of the snowsliding action, allowing us to gauge Woodrow's mounting despair and to marvel at the unflappable Sergeant's increasingly outrageous assurances and rationalizations.

It could be argued that these changes amount to a revolution in Sturges's dramatic method. Instead of writing and directing discrete comic scenes, each with its build-up, high points, and climax, Sturges here tends to run his scenes together, with motifs like Woodrow's conflicts with the Sergeant, Libby's attempts to tell Woodrow her news, and the town's hysteria continuing from scene to scene without a break. Perhaps this is something like Wagner's substitution of "endless melody" for opera based upon the unit of the discrete aria.

NOTES

1. Nearly 100 boxes of Sturges material are located in the Special Collections Department of the University of California at Los Angeles.
2. James Curtis, *Between Flops: A Biography of Preston Sturges* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1982), pp. 177-178.
3. André Bazin, *The Cinema of Cruelty: From Buñuel to Hitchcock*, ed. François Truffaut (New York: Seaver, 1982), p. 40.

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Ellie Young, Journals Manager

MARSHA KINDER

The Image of Patriarchal Power in Young Mr. Lincoln (1939) and Ivan the Terrible, Part I (1945)

"Of all American films made up to now this Young Mr. Lincoln *is the film that I would wish, most of all, to have made . . . I first saw this film on the eve of the world war. It immediately enthralled me with the perfection of its harmony and the rare skill with which it employed all the expressive means at its disposal. And most of all for the solution of Lincoln's image." Sergei Eisenstein, "Mr. Lincoln by Mr. Ford," (1945[1])*

John Ford's *Young Mr. Lincoln* (1939) and Sergei Eisenstein's *Ivan the Terrible, Part I* (1945) offer striking similarities in the way they inscribe their historical protagonists as forceful icons of patriarchal power. Both films center on a strong political leader from the past who brought unity to his nation in a period of political crisis. Both films reinscribe the myth of this historical figure in a way that comments on the contemporary political context in which the films were made. In both cases, the reinscription suppresses certain historical information about these figures (e.g., Lincoln's opposition to slavery and support of a strong centralized government, and Ivan's murderous acts of tyranny). These omissions help to control the way the spectator reads the relationship between these historical leaders and the reigning patriarchs in the contemporary context—i.e., preventing Lincoln from being identified with Franklin Delano Roosevelt (an issue examined in the highly influential *Cahiers du Cinéma* analysis of Ford's text[2]) and constructing Ivan as an historical precedent for Joseph Stalin (an issue explored by Herbert Marshall in his Preface to Eisenstein's autobiography[3]). As part of the political strategy of avoiding certain contemporary issues that might have proved troublesome, or even lethal in the Stalinist context, both films mythologize the historical figure in his youth, showing the young man as he grows into and comes to embody politcal power. Both films use a tall lean figure who grows fully erect as he literally becomes a national giant before our eyes. Both films end with this lone phallic figure being acknowledged by an enthusiastic crowd of anonymous supporters who both witness and proclaim his glorious ascension into History.

I first noticed the striking similarities between these two films when I happened to see them screened on consecutive days—before I was aware of the existence of Eisenstein's essay on *Young Mr. Lincoln* (which was brought to my attention by Brian Henderson). In comparing these two films, I want to suggest that not only did *Young Mr. Lincoln* help to shape Eisenstein's conceptualization of *Ivan the Terrible,* but that his essay on Ford's film was also shaped by his experience of just having finished Part I of *Ivan.* In both reading Ford's Lincoln and designing his own Ivan, Eisenstein was concerned less with the historical accuracy of the portrayal than with the rhetorical power of the hero's "extravagant" visual image.[4]

> But give any master of "personifying" historical monuments the task of inventing an appropriate figure, devoid of false pathos, for a bearer of the ideals of American democracy, and he would never think of creating such an extravagant figure—an exterior reminding one simultaneously of an old-fashioned semaphore telegraph, a well-worn windmill, and a scare crow clothed in a long, full-skirted frockcoat, and crowned with a shaggy top-hat in the shape of a stovepipe.
>
> In all probability it is precisely through these external features that this historical figure can be shown as heroic and full of pathos.[5]

Rather than focus on the issue of influence, I propose to examine the visual treatment of patriarchal power in these two films and their common stragegy of using the visual figure of the hero to direct the spectator's reading of

the narrative. In the process we will observe how the interplay among the three types of signifiers in the Peircian system of semiotics—the index, the icon, and the symbol—helps to create the kind of "harmony" that Eisenstein admired in Ford's text and achieved in his own. While not offering "harmony" as a critical value, I am suggesting that in both films, as the spectacle of the hero's physical image develops, this figuration helps distract us from the gaps in the narrative.

In Kristin Thompson's excellent study, *Eisenstein's* IVAN THE TERRIBLE: *A Neoformalist Analysis,* she uses Howard Hawks's *Sergeant York* (1940) and John Ford's *Mary of Scotland* (1936) "as a specific background" against which to read Eisenstein's "unique alternative systems"—including his defamiliarizing devices of "discontinuities" and "excesses" that foreground stylistic patterns rather than the direct pursuit of the narrative.[6] She chose these two examples of Hollywood classical cinema for the comparison with *Ivan* because they are of roughly the same period, of the same genre of historical biography, and of the same "quality" of production. In the case of *Sergeant York,* she notes the added similarity of "a past national hero who is held up as a model and used for patriotic propaganda relating to World War II." (p. 54) Of course, these same similarities are also present in *Young Mr. Lincoln.* But *YML* deviates from these other two examples in *not* sharing what Thompson describes as "the classical narrative cinema's most prominent feature . . . its suppression of artistic motivation in favor of a clear, direct narrative structure. That is, the stylistic aspects of a film will function to present the story events but will simultaneously strive to efface themselves so that narrative virtually always governs the work's dominant." (p. 54) What I am arguing here is that it is precisely the extravagant figure of Lincoln as a dominant that deviates from the Hollywood codes and that bears such a striking similarity to Eisenstein's construction of *Ivan,* Part I.

Young Mr. Lincoln: The Erection of an Historical Giant

Though Eisenstein praised the perfect harmony of *Young Mr. Lincoln* and the key role of Lincoln's figure in achieving it, his analysis is not very specific. I intend to provide this specificity—by examining the visual codes on which Eisenstein's reading can be grounded and which were omitted from the *Cahiers* analysis, which confined itself primarily to the narrative.[7] Although my analysis will center primarily on the film itself, it will make use of seven documents contained in the Twentieth Century-Fox Collections at the USC Doheny Memorial Library (Special Collections) and the UCLA Theater Arts Library:

(1) "The Young Lincoln" by Howard Estabrook, dated 7-22-35, a 32-page "Preliminary Outline of Screen Story."

(2) "The Lincoln Trial Story" by Lamar Trotti, dated January 17, 1938, a 13-page story outline.

(3) "Temporary Script" of "Young Mr. Lincoln," dated January 1939. Original story and screenplay by Lamar Trotti. 158 pages.

(4) Notes from a "Conference with Mr. Zanuck (on Temporary Script of January 13, 1939)", dated January 23, 1939, 6 pages.

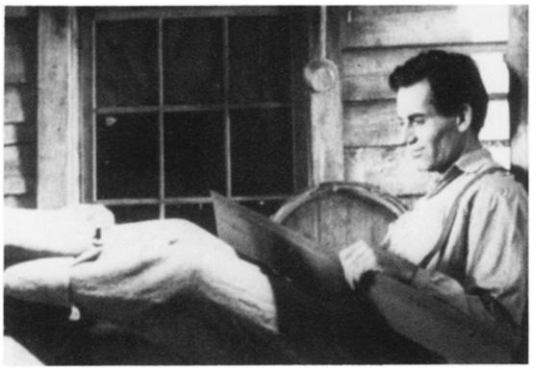
(5) "Final Script" of "Young Mr. Lincoln," dated January 27, 1939. Original story and screenplay by Lamar Trotti. 144 pages.

(6) Notes from a "Conference with Mr. Zanuck (on Final Script of January 27, 1939)," dated February 20, 1939, 4 pages.

(7) "Young Mr. Lincoln," Continuity and Dialogue Taken from the Screen, dated May 31, 1939. 133 pages.

Poetic Prologue: "Did he grow tall?"

The opening printed poem introduces a fanciful construct: when the ghost of Lincoln's mother, Nancy Hanks, returns to seek news of her son, she functions as a model spectator who is absent yet emotionally engaged. Our identification with her perspective will soon be strengthened by the appearance of another maternal spectator in the text, Abigail Clay, whom Lincoln will explicitly identify with his own mother and who will play a similar spectatorial role in lovingly assessing her own two sons as well as the young Lincoln. The emphasis on "the woman's angle" can be traced all the way back to the original Estabrook story. In the film, she's the one who poses the hermeneutic questions that control the narrative ("What's he done? . . . Did he get on?") and which draw us into the spectatorial project of reconciling the two contradictory images of Lincoln that are familiar to us all: "plain Abe," her humble son, vs. "the Great Emancipator," whom she didn't live to see. The specificity of the mother's



The "plain Abe" posture in our first look at Lincoln.

questions directs us to concrete codes that we can watch for in the narrative (e.g., "Did he learn to read? / Did he get to town?") and also in the visuals ("Did he grow tall?"). Thus, quite offhandedly (as one of many codes) and quite "naturally" (through the image of growth), the opening poem succeeds in establishing physical stature as a key index of power before the film provides us with our first glimpse of Lincoln. When this quaint little poem is matched against the film's final image of the gargantuan seated figure in the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, the juxtaposition defines the film's central question: how is a humble boy transformed into an historical giant?[8]

The framing images of Lincoln that bracket the narrative are expressed through two different kinds of signs—the symbolic signifiers of the verbal poem, and the iconic representation of the sculpture. The film offers the answer to the central enigma of Lincoln's transformation primarily through the third kind of signifier, the index. With its existential bond between signifier and signified, the index is the kind of sign most closely associated with Nature. And, as the *Cahiers* analysis has persuasively argued, Lincoln is presented as a hero whose morality is validated by both Law and Nature. The film suggests it was Lincoln's physical stature that was the key sign of his greatness—a trait that can be read either as a symbol of freakish awkwardness in the culturally coded context of polite society (represented in the film by Mary Todd's circle of friends), or as an index of biological superiority in the realm of nature. The film's semiotic project is to guide the spectator's reading of this sign—apparently validating the index (physical stature) but actually transforming the icon (looking like a phallus) and the symbol (the cultural coding of size) into natural indices of moral superiority.

The reading of physical stature ("growing tall") as an index of moral strength and as a dynamic of patriarchal power is developed primarily through three visual codes that are also verbally identified in the dialogue and dramatized in the narrative: standing up vs. lying or sitting down, untangling oneself into a visual "erection," and measuring all doubles and antagonists to see who is "the bigger of the two." In the *Cahiers* reading of Lincoln as phallus, he is defined both as a castrating and castrated figure; the film's visual codes develop this construct primarily through the dynamics of the erection.

Introduction to the Hero: "I'm plain Abraham Lincoln!"

In the opening scene we are introduced to Lincoln at an historic moment—1832 in New Salem, Illinois when he is making a political speech to win legislative office as a Whig. Yet, as the *Cahiers* analysis has pointed out, his greatness is not to be discovered in what he says, for in his opening lines he identifies himself as "plain Abraham Lincoln," and enunciates political positions that are *not* normally associated with "the Great Emancipator." One of the ways he is "dehistoricized" is by having our attention drawn away from what he says and toward what can be read from his body and its position in the frame.

The potential transformation from plain Abe to the historical giant is first figured visually in the movement from sitting down to standing up. In our first glimpse of Lincoln, he is half sitting, half reclining on a porch, with his head on the right side of the screen in profile, and his legs stretched out, so that his body fills the entire lower part of the frame. He holds a plank on his lap, an ambiguous image that can be read either as accentuating or suppressing the phallus. This posture prevents us from measuring him against John T. Stuart, the fatherly politician who later becomes his senior law partner and who here introduces him. When Lincoln gets up to speak, he "slowly unwinds himself" and grows fully erect, yet he's cut off at the thighs, then at the waist. Though he is centered in the

frame, we still can't assess his stature. As he is about to begin speaking, he reaches out tentatively to lean against the post, then decides not to, as if realizing it is not appropriate for the occasion. This "false move" becomes a sign of both his physical and political awkwardness.

We first see Lincoln in full figure in long shot, only after his speech is over, as he walks toward the camera and encounters the Clay family who have just pulled into town. Though the *Cahiers* critics have treated these scenes as two separate sequences, Lincoln's figure moves directly from the public arena of history into the private discourse of melodrama, smoothing over the symbolic distance between these two modalities. It is in the realm of melodrama that he makes his most meaningful contact with the law (here acquiring Blackstone's *Commentaries*) and where he finds the model spectator, Abigail Clay, the surrogate mother who both inspires and perceives his moves toward greatness.

Reading in Nature: "When I'm standing up, my mind's lying down"

In this second sequence, set in a grove of trees by a river, the two visual patterns introduced in the opening—the visual erection and lying down vs. standing up—are fully identified in the dialogue so that they can more readily control our reading of the rest of the film. The sequence opens with Lincoln in a highly unusual posture: he is lying on his back reading with his long legs spread wide, propped up against a tree, and the law book propped on his torso (again, looking in one shot as if it displaces the phallus).

When his fiancée Ann Rutledge approaches, he says, "Hello, Ann, . . . give me a minute to kind of untangle myself." Both verbally and visually the "untangling" evokes an erection—a move made in response to the presence of the woman he desires. The love between them is never fully consummated, for she will die before they marry and Lincoln's sexuality will be suppressed in the rest of the film (as the *Cahiers* analysis has argued). Yet it will be partially displaced onto the maternal figure of Abigail Clay, evoking the Oedipal configuration. The sexual potential in Lincoln's posture and the link with the Oedipal taboo are underlined by Ann's next line:

Lincoln's unusual posture for reading in nature.

"Aren't you afraid you'll put your eyes out, reading like that, upside down?" This faint Oedipal echo reminds us that the transformation of Nancy Hanks's son, plain Abe, into the Father of his Country can also be reinscribed within the privatized world of melodrama as the Oedipal son aspiring to fill the role of the father. In Lincoln's case there is no need to kill off the father because his own is never mentioned in the film (though he and his second wife were characters in the Estabrook story), and the surrogate patriarch Clay (whose name evokes connections both with man's humble roots in nature and with a former American giant of history) will die off screen as conveniently as will Ann Rutledge.

Both Lincoln's initial posture and Ann's remark draw our attention to the film's tendency to turn things "upside down"—its patterns of reversals and alternations that are made explicit in Lincoln's line that follows: "When I'm standing up, my mind's lying down, and when I'm lying down, my mind's standing up." This line introduces the mind/body duality that is an alternating pattern not only in Lincoln's development (as he alternately relies on his mental and physical powers), but also in the film's structure, which alternately relies on word and image to enunciate its controlling codes. Instead of accepting the moral connotations of these phrases and postures—*lying down* signifying laziness or passivity (as in "lying down on the job") and *standing up* signifying the assertion of moral courage (as in "standing up for one's rights"), the film redefines both moral "positions," showing that the alternation between both leads to greater strength. This alternation becomes another way of reconciling the

two Lincolns—the humble Abe who was comfortable lying down and the Great Emancipator who stood up for the underdog.

Graveside Decision: "Ann, you win . . . wonder if I could have tipped it your way, just a little?"

Although the rupture caused by the omission of Ann's sudden death is smoothed over by a dissolve from a close-up of a ripple in the river in spring to a long shot of snow-covered ice flowing downriver in winter (a fairly conventional device that satisfied Zanuck's request in the February 20th story conference for "a better transition to the shot of Ann's gravestone"), the continuity provided by Lincoln's figure and its postures is far more compelling. When Lincoln comes to Ann's grave to decide whether to go into Law, he first stands fully erect. His indecisiveness is visually portrayed as an alternation between standing and squatting. What is new in this scene is that this alternating pattern is identified as a conscious strategy: Lincoln pretends to lose when he is actually in control; he stands full figure when he decides to let the toss of a stick decide his fate; he squats by Ann's grave when he acknowledges that he may have let her win. This scene demonstrates both verbally and visually that sitting can no longer be read as a weak posture. Rather, sitting functions as a mediating position between "lying down" and "standing up" as forcefully demonstrated by the final image of the Lincoln Memorial.

His First Case: "Gentlemen, just hold your horses and sit down!"

Functioning as a rehearsal for the murder trial that will follow but in no way essential to the plot, this sequence dramatizes how Lincoln consciously uses the feigning of weakness, the alternating between physical strength and mental wit, and the power dynamics of sitting and standing in his new practice of Law. The scene opens with Lincoln sitting in a chair with his feet propped up on an open window and his head on the right side of the frame—a position very similar to the posture that designated "plain Abe" in the opening scene. Two angry farmers stand behind him. After he derisively tells these "gentlemen" to hold their horses and sit down, a reverse angle reveals the seated Lincoln with his head on the left, looking more commanding and beginning to resemble the image from the Lincoln Memorial. When Lincoln confronts one man with the other's accusations, he suddenly pops up and turns his chair around before sitting back down. As he presents his clever mediating solution, he feigns a mock humility. When he says, "the whole thing's settled," he stands up for the first time, momentarily blocking one of the men from the camera and forcing the other to look up at him and acknowledge his physical and mental victory. When the men refuse to accept his clever solution, Lincoln bullies them into acquiescing. He dons his stove-pipe hat and says, "Yes siree, Bob," both visually and verbally accentuating the phallic nature of his victory.

The Fair: (Lincoln, choosing between two pies) "First one, then the other."

Though appearing loose and varied, the fair sequence demonstrates the codes of alternation that have thus far guided the film's structure and finally launches the plot that will control the narrative development of the scenes that follow. In the story conference on February 20, 1939, Zanuck expressed concern over the length of this sequence ("our only slow part of the picture") yet wanted to retain the weight-lifting scene or "to devise something to keep Lincoln alive in this episode." It was clearly spelled out that Lamar Trotti was to discuss the "sequence with Mr. Ford and work it out along the lines discussed in conference."

The sequence opens with an historical context, an Independence Day parade that includes veterans from the '76 Revolution, but ends with the first climax of the melodramatic fiction; the opening is light and playful, but it moves into murder. The sequence intercuts between the sexual harassment of the wife of Matt Clay by two bullying locals, and a series of games in which Lincoln demonstrates his mental and physical powers of mediation (judging a pie contest, splitting rails, and winning a tug of war). These games also function as double symbolic substitutions for the battles he will face both in the melodramatic context of the film's plot (the lynch scene and trial)

and in the historic context of the Civil War (where he would become the Great Emancipator).

This sequence extends the alternating movement between history and melodrama that first appeared in the opening scene, particularly with the introduction of the Clays (originally Lincoln was to meet a different family), an addition that was suggested by Zanuck in the story conference on January 23, 1939.

> Mr. Zanuck . . . feels that we are inclined to be narrative rather than dramatic in the first part of the story, and then when we come to Abigail and her family, it is hard to adjust oneself to the change of mood. Therefore, it was decided to introduce the family in the opening, making it Abigail and her family who are moving to this country . . . Seeing her in the opening epidosde will serve to tie her up with the story and will help the transition to the "murder" and what follows. Too, it will give the story an interesting slant to suggest that this woman from whom he gets the law book is the one who was instrumental in starting Lincoln on his career. In other words, what he learns in the book which he originally got from her, enables him to serve her and her boys later on. (p. 1)

In both sequences we can see Zanuck, as the embodiment of the Hollywood institution, urging a conventional narrative linearity that is repeatedly balanced by Ford's unconventional manipulation of the larger structural relations. Here in the fair sequence this pattern of alternating between history and melodrama serves to introduce the film's central narrative episode of the murder while keeping the audience from realizing how unconventionally late the plot gets started. The melodramatic plot of murder and trial created by Lamar Trotti is positioned within the larger structural movement between the two historic images of Lincoln (plain Abe vs. the Great Emancipator) that frames the entire narrative and was the thematic center of Estabrook's original story.

The fair sequence also introduces the film's only other historical figures—Mary Todd and Stephen A. Douglas, who form a romantic triangle with Lincoln and thereby strengthen the bond between the melodrama and history. They also function as spectators, who are harder to convince of Lincoln's greatness than Abigail Clay. Yet all three spectators in the text fit within the Oedipal configuration

Top: Lincoln sits on a low curb between Douglas and Mary Todd. Bottom: when Lincoln stands, both have to look up to him.

—either as the loving mother or the rejecting parental couple.

The physical staging of their meeting accentuates the dual perspective of Lincoln as both their social inferior and physical, mental and moral superior. When he is introduced, he is sitting on a low curb while they are seated on chairs on the sidewalk. When he stands up to shake hands, he suddenly towers over them. When he sits back down on the curb, Mary literally has to speak down to him. Lincoln calls attention to the visual dynamic by using the images of sitting in a self-deprecatory way, undercutting his new identity as a lawyer which Douglas has just praised: "What I'm really doing is wearing a hole in Stuart's best rocking chair." This passivity is exposed as a deceptive pose in the three competitive games that follow.

Since the Tar Barrel burning immediately follows the Tug of War, we at first think it's to be the fourth game, but this night event merely provides an atmospheric transition to the murder (a device suggested by Zanuck). When Lincoln appears at the scene of the

crime, he stands center screen with his back to the camera, wearing his stove-pipe hat, with one foot propped up and an arm leaning on a fence. This time he makes no false move; the posture signals a man of balance and judgment, contemplating the scene. This striking image not only "keep(s) Lincoln alive" in this scene, but it also allows him temporarily to control the point of view and to reaffirm the central position of his iconic figure in the narrative, even within this highly episodic sequence and even within the "murder" plot. Lincoln confidently walks against the crowd, who are fast becoming a lynch mob, and goes directly to Abigail Clay. Not recognizing him, she asks, "Who are you?" He replies without false humility: "I'm your lawyer, ma'am."

What are we to make of Abigail's failure to recognize Lincoln, particularly if, as I have argued, she functions as a model spectator? In their first meeting, Lincoln was seen for the first time in full figure; in this second meeting, as he again comes to her aid, he confirms his unqualified commitment to the Law. Her failure of recognition works against narrative continuity in order to call our attention to this shift in Lincoln's image.

The Lynch Mob: "I'm just a fresh lawyer trying to get ahead"

This sequence, essential to the melodramatic plot, is also constructed as a midpoint in Lincoln's movement between the two images of plain Abe and the Great Mediator. When the lynch mob tried to break into the jail with a huge log and when Lincoln threads his way through the crowd to oppose their action, saying "I can lick any man here, hands down," we are bound to look backward to the rail-splitting and tug-of-war games in the fair sequence and to his disarming humor and strong-arm tactics in his first law case. The *Cahiers* critics describe Lincoln's triumph in this scene as castrating, particularly when he makes the mob lay down the phallic pole.[9] The sequence also makes us look forward to Lincoln's historical ascension (which is partially based on this castrating power), particularly when he says: "We seem to lose our heads in times like this, we do things together that we might be ashamed to do by ourselves." From this point on in the narrative, his physical size will no longer cast him in the role of bully (he will use his mental powers to impose his will), but will elevate him to the position of grand statesman.

The visuals also help to underline the transition. When he first confronts the crowd at the jail, he spreads his arms and props them against the door as if to gain better leverage for his opposition. The formal framing of his figure by the doorway also makes it easier for us to connect this posture with Biblical images of Samson or Christ. Yet this gesture also evokes Lincoln's "false move" in the opening sequence, which was a sign of awkwardness and self-doubt; here the gesture is transformed into a sign of grace under pressure. Just before he makes his statesman-like speech, the shift in tone is signalled by a close-up of Lincoln in isolation, which enables him to transcend this melodramatic context. Subsequently there is an inset close-up of Abigail, expressing gratitude and registering full comprehension of his control over this perilous scene. When everyone else leaves, Lincoln is left alone with the abandoned pole; the camera observes him in long shot, at last surrendering his full figure to our uninterrupted gaze. Not only do such shots emphasize the subtle shift in Lincoln's image, they also help the spectator to bridge the gap between melodrama and history.

Mary Todd's Party: (Mary, describing Lincoln's dancing) "The worst way I've ever seen"

Lincoln's heroic action in the lynch scene does enable him to "get ahead"; it brings an invitation to Mary Todd's party where his physical stature will mark him as outcast. The sequence opens with a series of short scenes

that alternate between Mary's written missive and Lincoln's tangled postures as he grooms himself for the event. His self-conscious awkwardness is displayed again on the dance floor, where his stiffness is read not as phallic strength, but as clumsy ineptitude. Though the several allusions to his ugliness in earlier versions of the script have been omitted, his physical eccentricity is so extreme in this scene that it is even noted by the *Cahiers* critics who have otherwise ignored the visual dynamics of Lincoln's extravagant figure.[10]

When Mary leads Lincoln to the balcony, the presence of the river and the music evokes the natural context in which his stature regains its moral and emotional superiority. As if acknowledging the reversal in values, she retreats and sits down, looking up to him as he gazes at the river below and thinks of Ann Rutledge.[11]

Lincoln plays "Dixie": "Comes down from David's harp in the Bible"

This brief scene contributes nothing to the plot, but it guides the spectator in how to read metaphoric substitutions, mythical analogues and historic reverberations that construct the figure of Lincoln. When Lincoln dwells on the river, his friend Efe teasingly remarks: "Folks'd think it was a pretty woman or something, the way you carry on." This remark renders explicit the visual identification between nature and woman which was dramatized at the end of the party sequence. Lincoln jokes that his hat is his office. When we consider that his stove-pipe hat makes him look like a walking phallus, we realize that his power of office does lie in his incarnation as a phallic icon.

When we see the tall figure of Lincoln astride a mule accompanied by a short, rotund side-kick with a coon-skin cap, we are likely to think of Don Quixote and Sancho Panza.[12] This iconic connection makes us look for deeper thematic significance: the historic Lincoln can be read as a quixotic idealist who would sally forth to do battle, a comic figure who would later prove his tragic potential.

The music on the audio track (which contrasts sharply with the waltzes and reels played at Mary's party) leads us to historic connections.

Efe: What's that tune you're playing?
Lincoln: Don't know—catchy though.
Efe: Makes you want to march or something.

This dialogue forces us to listen closely to the tune, which turns out to be *Dixie*—the film's only direct allusion to the Civil War where Lincoln would prove his greatness. Yet even this brief ironic allusion clearly indicates the reluctance of the film-makers to reveal Lincoln's commitment to the Northern cause.

One of the reasons this scene is so elliptical is that it formerly served as a transition to scenes that have been omitted from the film—cuts that were at least partially motivated by a desire to reduce the direct references to slavery. In the original Estabrook story, slavery was the key issue in Lincoln's congressional race with Douglas, which was the central focus of their rivalry. There was a slave market scene and an important black character named Julep, who was to be played by Bill Robinson and who was described as "a happy-go-lucky negro slave, singer, dancer and musician, freed by Offutt and befriended by Lincoln." Estabrook proudly claimed for his story an "opportunity for approximately ten musical numbers or important use of music, and approximately four dance numbers"—perhaps enough to identify the film with the musical genre, whose lighthearted tone might have made the slavery issue more palatable.

In Lamar Trotti's story outline, Julep, the slave market scene and the congressional race were all omitted (along with most of the song and dance numbers), but in their place was the following symbolic scene—which seems to belong more in a film by D. W. Griffith than by John Ford.

> A FARMHOUSE. Men been killing hog. Big pot boiling. Over to side, small children with big pot, full of water. Starting to light fire. Pickaninny in fire. Lincoln stops. Children explain trying to boil black out of the child so won't have to be sold, can be white and free. Lincoln's face. (Only touch of slavery issue.) Lincoln thoughtful, perhaps one revealing remark to Herndon.

In Trotti's "Temporary Script," this chilling scene takes place at Carrie Sue's family farm and immediately follows Efe's line about Dixie making "you want to march." When one of the children tells the astonished Lincoln, "We're aimin' to boil Cuffy clean white —like us—and the hog—so's he can't never be sold!" Lincoln makes his "revealing"

Lincoln quips, "People used to say I could sink an axe deeper than anyone they ever saw," while beside him Carrie Sue (Ann Rutledge's surrogate) vigorously stirs a boiling cauldron with a huge stick.

remark to Efe: "It's going to take a *world of boiling* to bring that about—*a world of boiling!*" (p. 94). Not only is Lincoln's remark highly ambiguous, but he leaves the "pickaninny" in the pot. This remarkable scene was cut from the January 27th "Final Script" along with Lincoln's playing of *Dixie,* but was restored in the February 20th story conference, where the notes contain the following statement:

> The episode of the negro kid being boiled—and Carrie Sue—to be confined into one scene, as discussed in conference. This includes putting back Lincoln playing *Dixie.* (p. 3)

In the film, the scene is gone and all that remains is *Dixie.*[13] In suppressing the slavery issue and Civil War, the film simplifies not only the historic Lincoln and his achievements, but also the power of the phallic icon by denying its potential for lethal violence.

When Lincoln is asked about his "Jew's harp," he reveals his identification with the Biblical David, from whom he could not be more visually distinct, yet this connection bolsters Lincoln's image as Outsider. In both the "Temporary Script" and the "Final Script," Lincoln had earlier implicitly identified himself with Jews at Mary's party in a joking remark made immediately after his denial of membership in the "very fine old" Lincoln family of Massachusetts:

> MAN
> Yet there's an odd similarity in Christian names. I remember there was an Abraham, a Solomon and a Levi Lincoln.
>
> LINCOLN
> (lifting his eyebrows)
> Did you say "*Christian*" names?
> (p. 79)

The Biblical text of David and Goliath strengthens Lincoln's validation by the Book and the Law. It also introduces a mythic battle that substitutes indirectly for the Civil War that was suppressed from the film. More specifically, Lincoln's movement from underdog to historic giant is given mythic resonance by his double identification with both David *and* Goliath. The myth can be reinscribed politically in the historic context of Lincoln who fought for the underdog while embodying Big Government. As an historical figure, David himself possessed this double identity—he was the underdog who slew the giant, yet he also was the strong Jewish patriarch who unified his people and led them to a new level of historic greatness.

The story of David and Goliath can also be read as a politicized version of the Oedipal myth, where the puny son of a subjugated race challenges and defeats a giant patriarch from a more dominant culture. Moreover, David may have played the conquering hero in his battle with Goliath, but in the tale of David and Bathsheba he was guilty of murder and adultery. The issue of stealing another man's wife is evoked in the film when the two locals harass the wife of Matt Clay. In both the "Temporary Script" and the "Final Script" this sexual aggression is intercut with the strong man sequence that Zanuck liked so well, in which Lincoln (as local underdog) successfully challenges a Circus Hercules—a juxtaposition that evokes both the sexual and patricidal components of the Oedipal configuration. When Hercules was cut from the script, his function was taken over by the allusion to David.

The moral ambiguity of the Oedipal configuration is extended only figuratively to Lincoln, who threatens to take Mary Todd away from the more experienced Stephen Douglas, who doubles as romantic and political rival. Yet Lincoln is relieved of moral responsibility since Mary is the romantic aggressor, and since sex is totally omitted from the depiction of their relationship.

Lincoln Visits the Clay Women: "You folks are just like my folks"

This scene equips Lincoln for his courtroom victory by strengthening his moral alignment with Abigail Clay and by providing him with another book, the Almanac, that he will use to catch the murderer. The scene also functions to integrate Lincoln's dual posture as an easy-going country boy who feels at home with the Clays and as a wily city lawyer who uses his strength to defend the underdog. The phallic nature of Lincoln's figure is stressed more emphatically in this scene than practically anywhere else in the film. He is introduced wielding an axe, quipping "People used to say I could sink an axe deeper than anyone they ever saw," while beside him Carrie Sue (Ann Rutledge's surrogate) is vigorously stirring a boiling cauldron with a huge stick. Repeatedly Lincoln is positioned either leaning on or standing next to a vertical pole that helps support the log cabin in which the Clays reside. The proverbial log cabin helps to identify the Clays with Lincoln and to validate his reading of the Clay women as substitutes for his own dead mother, sister and fiancée. Part of this shared identity is a racist alignment with the South in which whites are perceived as victims of non-whites; not only do we learn that Mr. Clay was killed by a drunken Indian, but Lincoln claims, in his single direct reference to slavery, that "Kentucky's a mighty fine place to live, but with all the slaves coming in, white folks had a hard time making a living." The "Final Script" contained a longer version of this speech that made Lincoln sound even more like an apologist for slavery: "A good slave didn't have to worry. The people who owned him looked after him, but all we ever had was the right to go and come as we pleased. Not that I stand up for slavery, but I can see it has its advantages when your stomach's empty." (p. 84)

When Lincoln talks comfortably with the Clay women, he reclines in the "honest Abe posture" from the opening shot. As soon as he strategically gets Abigail alone to ask her the crucial question that will be posed in court ("Which of your two sons killed Scrub White?"), their relationship is redefined by their shifting positions. She suddenly stands and cowers in fear; Lincoln follows, looming beside her in a threatening posture. After he accepts her refusal, a reverse two-shot makes his superior size look protectively paternal. The castrating potential of the phallic figure is held in check by the moral power of the Mother.

The Judge's Visit: "Don't you think you ought to have some older lawyer with more experience to help you out tomorrow?"

The Oedipal rivalry with the father is presented most pointedly in the scene where the judge comes "as an older man," to give young Lincoln advice, a scene positioned between the two courtroom sequences and which compresses three scenes from an earlier version of the script (a condensation suggested by Zanuck).

This narrative condensation enables the scene to evoke all of the film's earlier sequences with Oedipal traces through visual and audio allusions. The scene opens with Lincoln playing his Jew's harp (reminding us of his identification with David) and seated in a tangled posture with his feet propped up on an open window (reminding us of a similar posture in the scene with Ann Rutledge). He looks down at Mary Todd and Stephen Douglas passing beneath the window in an intimate tête-à-tête, reminding us of the fair sequence where the romantic triangle was introduced.

When the judge advises Lincoln to withdraw from the case, Lincoln raises his left foot and positions it at the top of the frame. In the most disruptive shot in the whole film, his gigantic foot directly confronts the camera, accentuating the rebellious nature of this posture and suggesting that the frame can hardly contain Lincoln's coiled body which is straining to unleash its full powers. When the Judge

proposes Douglas, Lincoln's romantic rival, as an older, more experienced replacement, we see Lincoln in profile in the "plain Abe" posture from the opening sequence. He leans forward and politely refuses, holding his indignation in check. He remains seated throughout the scene, never flaunting his physical stature, and then resumes playing the Jew's harp, identifying himself with the challenging underdog on both visual and audio tracks, but expressing total confidence that he holds in reserve both the mental and physical powers of the giant.

The Two Courtroom Sequences: "the bigger of the two"

When J. Palmer Cass, as the key witness for the prosecution, claims "it was the bigger of the two" Clay brothers who killed his buddy Scrub White, he identifies a visual code that we have been using all through the film to evaluate Lincoln in relation to his inferior rivals. Nowhere is this physical dynamic more apparent or more playfully varied than in the two courtroom sequences—a dynamic that was present in the Estabrook story ("the young lawyers and Lincoln occupy themselves chatting and measuring their heights to see who is the tallest—Lincoln tops the others who attribute it to his long legs"). In one shot of the film, the Clay boys are deep in the foreground with Matt, the taller brother, on the left; between them in mid-ground stands Lincoln's opponents as mental and moral pigmies (even Douglas is only slightly larger than the others) and visually evokes "the bigger of the two" before it is verbalized by Cass. The verbalization is registered by Lincoln as he sits upright in a posture that clearly prefigures the historic image in the Lincoln Memorial.

In both courtroom sequences Lincoln employs all of the visual and verbal strategies he had used in previous scenes, but with more wit and daring, for now the issue is climactic for the plot. His castrating tactics from the lynch scene here depend on his disarming humor, and the phallic pole is reduced to a cigar. When he reveals that Palmer's real name is Jack Cass, Lincoln snatches a cigar from the witness's hand and tosses it on the floor, making the jury erupt into derisive laughter. In the final courtroom reversal, when Lincoln accuses Cass, the accuser, who is his physical equal and mental inferior, he says, "Your body hid what you were doing." This remark reminds us, not only that the visualization of the murder fooled both the model spectator Abigail Clay and the film audience, but also that the semiotics of physical stature must be read in combination with other codes.[14]

The Double Ascension into History and Nature: "I don't reckon neither of us better underrate each other from here in."

In the last two scenes (neither of which is essential to the plot) Lincoln's final transformation from humble son to powerful patriarch is doubly validated as a matter of public record in History and as an organic development in Nature.

His historic ascension takes place in the corridors of Justice where it is witnessed by the historic figures Mary Todd and Stephen Douglas, who now fully acknowledge his greatness. The alternating downward and upward angle point-of-view shots between Lincoln and Douglas exaggerate the former's physical superiority, assuring us that he's "the bigger of the two" and can never again be underrated. In Trotti's original story outline, he says: "America's future written in these two men and their differing views! Lincoln tall and gaunt and merry. Douglas short and fussy and importantly dignified." Since their "differing [political] views" have been suppressed from the film, their contrasting physical images and visual perspectives are meant to carry the full weight of this historic contrast. After turning away from Todd and Douglas, Lincoln walks toward a cheering crowd whom we hear but don't see—an omission that not only encourages the film audience to conflate the approving spectators from the diegesis with the accolades of future generations, as the *Cahiers* critics note, but also to project ourselves as an audience into the text. In the final shot Lincoln appears as a lone, fully erect figure, framed by a rectangle of light, making his grand entrance onto the stage of History.

Whereas in History the ascension is achieved through metonymy, a matter of positioning, in Nature Lincoln's "stunning departure . . . into the landscape" (to use Eisenstein's phrase) occurs through metaphoric substitutions facil-

itated by dissolves. Accompanied by his Sancho, the chivalric Lincoln bids farewell to his mother surrogate Abigail Clay and is kissed by Carrie Sue. This time when he takes his solo walk into the future, he tells Efe: "I think I might go on a piece, maybe to the top of that hill." This line encourages us to read the silhouette shot of Lincoln climbing the hill as his rise to power; the thunder claps and "glory Hallelujahs" from *The Battle Hymn of the Republic* on the sound track as the Civil War; and, after he disappears from the frame, the coming rain as his tragic end.[15]

The film dissolves from the rain to a close shot of the famous statue of the Lincoln Memorial, pulls back to a medium shot, then dissolves to a different angle, continuing the camera's backward movement until the full seated figure is revealed. This gradual disclosure of the statue leads us to wonder how tall would he be if this gargantuan figure ever stood up and became fully erect!

Located in Washington, the seat of American power, this historic monument is pivotal to Ford's "solution of Lincoln's image" that Eisenstein so much admired. When the humble son becomes the good father of his country, he is shown seated—a mediating position that is far less threatening than the fully erect posture, particularly to other sons and patriarchs but also to loving mothers. Like Teddy Roosevelt's motto, "Speak softly but carry a big stick," Lincoln's seated phallic figure designates a man who could choose both to exercise and restrain his force, but who always held additional power in reserve and who always possessed extraordinary potential, whether mythologized as the potent "Young Mr. Lincoln" or as the historic giant cut off in his prime.

Ivan the Terrible, Part I: The Fetishizing of the Icon

An equally detailed analysis of *Ivan the Terrible, Part I* would produce far more differences from *Young Mr. Lincoln* than similarities in the visual codes. Limits of space prevent me from presenting such an extended treatment here. The shorter analysis that follows is designed specifically for the comparison of the two films, foregrounding their common strategy of using the figure of the iconic hero as a stylistic pattern that directs the reading of the narrative.

One of the key similarities between the two iconic figures is their visual extremity. Though it is always heroic, never awkward nor comic, Ivan's phallic figure is as "extravagant" a spectacle as Lincoln's. Not only is his body "a purely compositional element" like Lincoln's, but his "expressivity" is extended "to the entire visual field," making him (in Kristin Thompson's terms) truly expressionistic.[16] Although the sets in *Young Mr. Lincoln* rarely reflect the hero's body and the film never goes so far as *Ivan* in violating the spatial and temporal codes of realistic representation, the spectacle of Lincoln's figure and postures frequently distracts us, as we have seen, from discontinuities in the narrative and from the symbolic distance between history and melodrama.

In both films there are temporal gaps of indeterminate length between most sequences. They are frequently bridged by fairly conventional devices such as visual markers in *Young Mr. Lincoln* (e.g., the dissolve between two seasonal shots of the river and the close shot of a dated tombstone in the graveside sequence, or the insert shot of a dated newspaper item when Lincoln becomes a town lawyer in Springfield), or in *Ivan* by dialogue hooks (e.g., ending the wedding banquet with the war cry, "To Kazan!", and opening Ivan's deathbed sequence with someone explaining "while on the very way back from Kazan, the Tsar fell ill") or by the changing lengths and shapes of Ivan's hair and beard from one sequence to another. By marking the temporal gaps they bridge, such transitions actually accentuate the ruptures. In contrast, the visual dynamics of the hero's physical image provide an iconic pattern of continuity that fills in for

narrative development by drawing the spectator's attention away from ruptures in the plot.

In "A Dialectic Approach to Film" (written in 1929), Eisenstein speculated that the visual image might one day provide a unifying structure in place of the plot.

> Quite logically the thought occurs: could not the same thing be accomplished more productively by not following the plot so slavishly, but by materializing the idea, the impression, of *Murder* through a free accumulation of associative matter? . . . The plot is no more than a device without which one isn't yet capable of telling something to the spectator! In any case, effort in this direction would certainly produce the most interesting variety of forms.[17]

In his later essay on *Young Mr. Lincoln,* Eisenstein perceived that Ford had made just such an effort.

> His informal plot, almost plotless or anecdotal, . . . looks on closer inspection like a thoroughly composed image synthesizing all those qualities that shone in the historical-political role played by this American giant.[18]

Despite or rather *because* of the weakness in its plot, Eisenstein claimed for *Young Mr. Lincoln* "an astonishing harmony of all of its component parts, a really amazing harmony as a whole"[19] and it is precisely this quality that made him wish he had directed the film.[20]

In her detailed and comprehensive analysis of *Ivan the Terrible,* Kristin Thompson certainly acknowledges the central role of Ivan's figure. Yet she does not deal with the way it serves narrative development, particularly since she is concerned with foregrounding narrative discontinuities in contrast to Hollywood classical cinema. In fact, her analysis of the discontinuities is so exhaustive that I feel no need to dwell on further examples here. Partly because she treats the three parts of *Ivan* as one continuous structure (arguing that "the breaks between parts do not necessarily represent the most significant structural pauses or turning points in the narrative" (p. 61), she tends to neglect certain structural lines that distinguish Part I of *Ivan* from Part II, particularly when the former is set against *Young Mr. Lincoln.* As Thompson acknowledges in the introduction to her neo-formalist methodology, "The use of other backgrounds would allow other elements to come forward" (p. 58).

Instead of using the double ascension that closes *Young Mr. Lincoln* or the contrasting images of the hero from the poetic prologue and historic monument that frame Ford's film, Eisenstein brackets Part I of *Ivan* with two contrasting coronations that doubly anoint Ivan as Tsar.[21] Within these framing ascensions, the narrative traces the transfer of power from the institutional icons of the monarchy—crown, scepter, orb—to the person of Ivan, transforming him into the living embodiment of a unified Russia. The temporary withholding of Ivan's person and face in the opening coronation is inscribed as a sign of his temporary powerlessness, but through the paradoxical dynamics of desire, in the final coronation Ivan's deliberate withholding of himself from the people becomes one of the essential strategies for completing his own fetishization. In this reinscription of the myth of Ivan, political rule is eroticized.

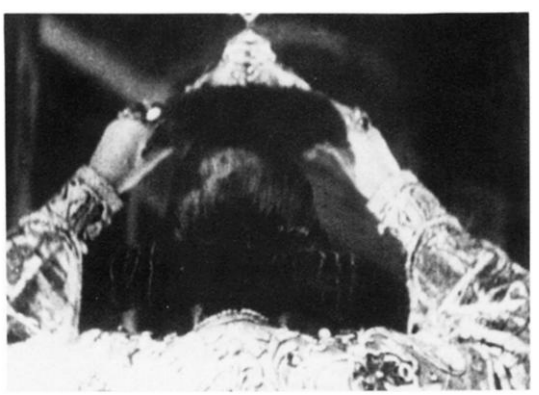
In the wartime context of 1943–45 when the film was made, this process of fetishizing the hero evoked and helped to justify the "cult of personality" that had developed around Stalin. While Part I pleased Stalin in its reinscription of Ivan as an historic precedent for his own fetishization, Part II raised serious moral questions about this process, suggesting it might be a perversion that underlay all political tyranny. Not surprisingly, it evoked the wrath of Stalin who suppressed the film.

The Opening Coronation: The Struggle for Signification

In this opening sequence, the emphasis is on the traditional symbols of the monarchy that are passed on from one ruler to another. Within this institutional context, we watch the young Ivan begin to take an active role in usurping and manipulating the signs of power. Since his blood is not a strong enough index to secure his right to the throne, he based his claim on his masculine strength and physical resemblance to the erect phallus, which so definitively distinguish him from his effeminate, mother-dominated rival Vladimir, who is merely a figurehead for Ivan's Boyar enemies. Ivan's strategy is immediately recognized by the Livonian Ambassador, who says,

"If he's strong—they'll recognize him."[22] Ivan's semiotic project is to make the phallic icon replace traditional symbols and assume the power of the index.

The opening shot is a close-up of the crown, a classical example of metonymy. Though Thompson claims that this shot introduces a "spatial lack" that is soon filled by the entrance of Ivan (p. 117), one could more readily argue that this opening close-up privileges the importance of the symbol over the man. When Ivan finally appears, he emerges out of the foreground with his back to the camera and is brought forward passively to receive the crown, which is kissed and blessed by Pimen, the Metropolitan of Moscow, who officiates at the ceremony. Then Ivan intervenes; his hands reach up and place the crown on his own head, which (as Thompson also observes) is perfectly shaped to receive it—the first sign of the iconic resemblance between person and paraphernalia in this chain of expressionistic doubling. After receiving the scepter and orb



and nodding his crown to Pimen, Ivan suddenly spins around and reveals his face for the first time in a quick medium shot. The resemblance between signifiers is strengthened when Ivan is showered with gold coins while he himself, as the screenplay describes, "like an icon in its frame . . . is encased in golden garments." He breaks free of these "golden chains" when he moves forward to speak his first words as Tsar: "Now for the first time a Prince of Muscovy takes the crown of Tsar of all Russia upon himself." In beginning to define himself metonymically as the embodiment of Russia, he uses body metaphors. "To hold the Russian land in a single hand strength is needed . . . And what does our fatherland now resemble but a trunk, severed at knee and elbow?" (p. 50, 55) In Part II these images will become more significant, for Ivan will use other "hands" (both literally and through synecdoche), those of his Oprichnik guards, to perform his tyrannical deeds, including the beheadings of some of the Boyars. But here in Part I the issue is the acquisition of power, not its corrupting influence. As Ivan vigilantly listens to the Livonian Ambassador's reaction to his speech ("He must not become strong"), the shadow of the eagle from the Tsar's phallic scepter is projected onto his upturned face, revealing his capacity to absorb and embody the icon (the eagle), the symbol (the scepter) and the index (the shadow).

The Wedding Banquet: The Head of State Stands up to the Challenge

Strengthened by his marriage to Anastasia, the new Tsar demonstrates his ability to stand up to three challenges offered by the people, the Boyars, and foreign enemies, who will repeatedly test his strength through Parts I and II. Combining the symmetry of the doublet and triplet, the opening image presents the bridal couple seated on linked thrones with triangular shaped backs. While the heads of other characters in the scene also evoke the triangle by means of the headgear they wear, only the bare head of the iconic hero—with its broad forehead accented by a widow's peak and its narrow chin emphasized by a pointed beard—is triangular in itself. Already having proved itself well fitted to receive the crown in the opening coronation, here the Head of State replaces the crown entirely.

When Ivan confronts the angry mob that breaks into the hall, he strengthens his posi-

tion as Head of State by using his wit to turn these iconic connections to his advantage, playing with the visual similarity between bells and heads, two of the film's important motifs on the audio and visual tracks. When Gregory, a giant-sized member of the mob, mentions a falling bell as a "dread omen," Ivan whose own head is seen in close-up, responds: "Any head that believes in magic is like a bell." He taps his finger on the forehead of Gregory . . . "Empty." After the crowd's passion is dissipated by Ivan's joke, he releases his own castrating fury, threatening: "Whosoever without the Tsar's permission has cut down a bell shall speedily, by the Tsar's decree, have his head cut also." When he totally masters the crowd and the treacherous Boyars who have aroused the people's rebellion, we see Ivan's full figure again (as he is described earlier in the screenplay) "towering like an angry giant."

Ivan's cunning tactics of moving between humor and threats are reminiscent of the "castrating" Lincoln in the lynch mob sequence. In both crises the lone phallic hero "stands up" to an angry mob and in every one-to-one confrontation proves to be "the bigger of the two," even when the other is physically as large. We first see this pattern when Ivan's friend Kolychev asks permission to retire to a monastery. Hurt by this request, Ivan responds "betwixt thee and the Tsar of Heaven I shall not stand," then suddenly stands up and embraces his bulky friend (who had looked very large), becoming the bigger of the two both physically and morally. This pattern is used again in the context of foreign affairs when the envoy from Kazan taunts Ivan with, "Kazan—big. Moscow—small," and gives him a knife to take his own life, presenting the comparison of phallic power in both verbal and visual terms. Just as Ivan had received and transformed the sign of the crown in the opening coronation, here he grabs the fetishized knife and uses it to rally the support of the Russian people to "finish with Kazan forever," inspiring one of his new followers to reverse the taunt—"Kazan is little, Moscow is big."

The Battle of Kazan: Ivan at the Apex

At Kazan, Ivan's newly acquired power is tested in battle and reinforced by the positioning of his figure within the frame. The sequence opens with a montage of cannons being pushed up a steep incline. The serpentine line of soldiers zigzagging their way up a hill, from the summit of which Ivan oversees their movements, prefigures the final coronation. When these soldiers deposit their coins for the cannon fire, the image evokes the shower of gold coins from the opening coronation. Here the delay in Ivan's entrance into the scene no longer signals a lack of power, but the superiority of his position at the top of the hill and at the head of the army that conquers the Tower of Kazan. The visual punning on head and bell introduced in the wedding banquet is here elaborated into a multi-tiered structure of matching icons—the cupola-shaped helmets that identify Ivan's soldiers in battle, the hill, the conical tent with its triangular opening, through which Ivan makes his grand entrance, and the Tsar himself.

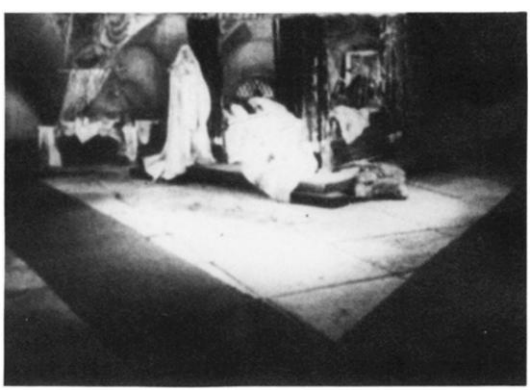
Within this sequence that marks a new high-point for Ivan, his ascension as Tsar is doubly proclaimed—making this episode a microcosm of the entire film's structure. It is first announced by common soldiers, who will later become his Oprichnik guards. As Ivan stands "high up, in front of the tents, above Kazan, . . . silhouetted against the morning sky," Basmanov tells young Fyodor, "See, son—the Tsar of all Russia" (pp. 84–85). At the end of the sequence, the second proclamation is made by Ivan himself. As his lone figure "towers above the cannon," surveying his victory amidst swirls of smoke, Ivan proclaims: "Now indeed I'll be Tsar; the Tsar of Moscow shall be recognized everywhere!" (p. 91).

Ivan's Illness: The Rise and Fall of the Good Father

From the pinnacle of victory at Kazan, Ivan plunges to the nadir when he is overcome by a deathly illness that dramatizes one of the dangers of investing all power in a mortal body. The sudden decline in Ivan's fortune reveals the alternating design of the narrative —a pattern that had earlier been figured visually in the zigzagging movements of the soldiers at Kazan, but that here is made manifest in the rising and falling movement of the Tsar. The alternating movement is also present in

the way we read the delayed appearance of Ivan. No longer signalling a lack of importance as in the coronation or a position of power as in Kazan, this time the delay intensifies our suspense concerning his proximity to death.

When we finally do see Ivan, he lies on his deathbed receiving extreme unction, surrounded by priests. The visual details recall the ritual of the opening coronation, suggesting these last rites will bring closure to his reign as Tsar. The first move he makes is his hand receiving the candle from Pimen, the officiating priest, in the same way it had earlier grasped the royal scepter. This ceremony shifts the emphasis from Ivan's body back to the ritual paraphernalia, where it resided at the opening of the film before Ivan's first entrance. The triangular motif, previously centered on Ivan's head, here is displaced to compositions around his bed, including a white triangular wedge that juts into the foreground like an arrow pointing away from the weakened Tsar. An



open Gospel is placed over his face, creating a low tent from which he can barely peer out and mocking the loftly hilltop tent from which he had made his grand entrance at Kazan. The tent is also miniaturized in the curtained crib of Ivan's son Dmitry. Dark spectators (his Boyar enemies) emerge out of the foreground, reminding us of Ivan's first appearance at the coronation, suggesting that one of them may now emerge as the new Tsar. As the Boyars pass in front of and surround him, they temporarily block him from the camera and make him disappear, as if to hasten his death.

In confronting the Boyars and their refusal to pledge their support to Ivan's son Dmitry, the Tsar repeatedly rises and falls. After Kurbsky pledges his loyalty to Dmitry, Ivan promises to *raise* him to his former position as he pushed him *down* to a kneeling posture. Even when Ivan himself assumes the most groveling horizontal postures, he possesses an air of dignity, particularly when he lifts his chin with its pointed beard. This close-up of his thrusting chin, which is repeated later in the scene, makes Ivan look like a fallen Pharoah and enables him to maintain his image as a powerful icon even in decline.

Although he is nursed by Anastasia, Ivan is not infantilized by his illness. In Part I of the film he is never inscribed as the son, but always remains the good father, a role reinforced in this sequence by the presence of his infant son Dmitry (who never appears again). Ivan is presented as an orphaned, self-made man who is contrasted to the two pairs of mother-and-son figures (Anastasia and Dmitry vs. Eurphrosyne and Vladimir). The deathly illness of the patriarch opens a space in the foreground for a struggle between these emerging matriarchs: "Mother against mother, to defend her offspring she has risen" (p. 103).[23] Yet this sequence is designed to convince us that neither an infant nor an idiot (let alone a woman) can rival the physical and mental powers of the manly Ivan, who remains formidable even at the threshold of death.

This exclusive adherence to the role of father was not part of Eisenstein's original conception. In the screenplay Part I opens with a prologue (now a flashback in Part II of the film) in which the eight-year-old Ivan witnesses the poisoning of his mother by their Boyar relatives, prefiguring the death of Anastasia. The recent death of his father had opened a space for this treachery. The orphaned boy cowers in fear before the Boyars, who also murder his mother's lover. The young prince is forced to crawl on his hands and knees as the adult Ivan would later do in his grave illness. When Ivan first tries to assert his force, he arouses the derisive laughter of the Boyar patriarchs who surround him. When Suisky, "a Boyar of gigantic stature" (p. 27), tramples on the bed of Ivan's dead mother and insults her memory by suggesting that Ivan may be a bastard, the boy orders his arrest and makes his first decisive move toward becoming a real Tsar. This prologue evokes the oedipal configuration in identify-

ing Ivan as a son who has an intense love for his mother (which is later displaced onto his wife Anastasia) and (as in *Hamlet*) a murderous rivalry with the treacherous patriarchs who have replaced his royal father.

In Part I, Ivan is the young man establishing his patriarchal power; the adulterous desires of the young challenger are displaced onto Kurbsky. This is the Ivan with whom Eisenstein personally identified, particularly in those moments when the Tsar was forced to grovel before other patriarchs.

> In my own personal, too-personal, history I myself too often perpetrated this heroic deed of self-abasement. And in my personal, too-personal, innermost life, perhaps somewhat too often, too hurriedly, even almost too willingly and also . . . as unsuccessfully. However, I have also, like Ivan, managed to cut off heads sticking out of fur coats; the Terrible Tsar and I have pressed the proud gold hems together, accepting humiliation in the name of our most passionate aspirations.
>
> And often, after lifting up the sword over another's head, I have brought it down not so much on his as on my own.[24]

Ironically, Eisenstein identifies Stalin with the treacherous patriarch against whom Ivan rebels, knowing that Stalin would still cast himself as the Tsar. Perhaps this private irony helped to sustain Eisenstein through his period of compromise. In Part II Ivan becomes the tyrannical patriarch with unrestricted power. The insertion of the original prologue as a flashback not only helps to motivate his purges against the Boyars as revenge and to retain spectator sympathy with Ivan's cause, but it also carries the Oedipal struggle into both parts of the film and thereby creates a stronger base for his fetishization as Tsar.

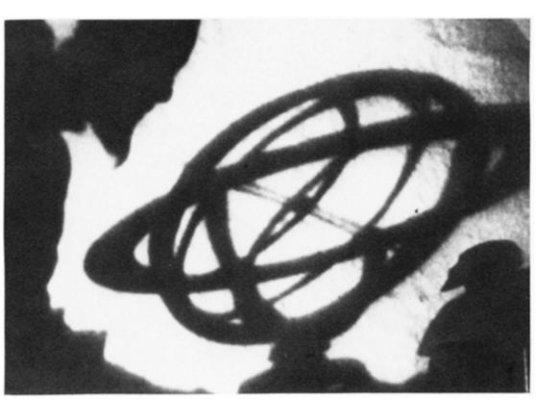
The different Ivans of Part I and II are presented as the good and bad father respectively—images that were identified in Eisenstein's own personal history with his inspiring teacher Meyerhold and the Saturnian Stalin. Eisenstein conceptualized both patterns as falling within the Oedipal configuration, of which he was skeptical because of what he considered Freud's overemphasis on sexuality, yet which he nevetheless applied (in a politicized version) to his own personal history.

> The Oedipus complex, standing out from Freud's teaching so disproportionately and exaggeratedly—in the play of passions within the school itself: the sons encroaching on the father. In reaction to the father's tyrannical regime, a father more like Saturn devouring his children than like Oedipus' father, the unoffending spouse of Jocasta . . . Why am I so heated, touching on the inner atmosphere of a group of scientists long dispersed? . . . Of course, I long ago stopped describing Freud's court and am now writing about the atmosphere in the school and theater of the idol of my youth, my theatrical mentor my teacher. Meyerhold![25]

His emotional construction of Meyerhold and Stalin as the good and bad father was highly intensified for Eisenstein, for the former was imprisoned, tortured and murdered by the latter. As a loyal, loving son to the good father, Eisenstein hid and preserved Meyerhold's outlawed archives—a move that was almost as rebellious a deed against the bad father Stalin as was his portrayal of Ivan in Part II.

Counter Moves: The Shadow of Death and Power

This structural unit of the narrative (covering what Thompson identifies as sections 5 and 6) alternates between the Boyars' plot to weaken Ivan abroad and isolate him at home and the countermoves of the Tsar. Though we have no way of knowing how much time has elapsed since Ivan's recovery from his deathly illness, the position of this sequence suggests that he is still on the defensive. His power is made manifest here not primarily through his person, but, as in the opening coronation, through his manipulation of symbolic paraphernalia—the globe and chessboard so prominently featured in the mise-en-scène in which he designs his moves—and through the projection of his shadow.



The chessboard leads us to read the main characters of the film as iconic figures making strategic counter-moves on a black and white grid of manichean morality. After having successfully escaped from check mate, the White King takes the Black Bishop (sending Pimen away); the evil Black side responds by sending their Queen after his. This kind of reading extends to Part II, where the chessboard becomes the setting for the livonian court which rewards the Russian Knight Kurbsky for betraying his King. In Livonia the chessboard court is feminized, as a sign of its weakness and decadence, particularly when contrasted with Ivan's patriarchal manipulation of the board in Part I, where he sends it as a gift to Queen Elizabeth to show her how to circumvent the Livonian blockade. In this chessgame structure, though the king is repeatedly threatened with check mate, Ivan ultimately proves to be the cunning victor.

In the scenes where we see Ivan plotting against the Boyars, his head and body cast looming shadows on the wall—an indexical sign of his growing power. When he is seated before the globe, both his body and shadow dominate the composition. In one shot the shadows of Ivan's head and of the globe are equal in size. Throughout these scenes, the interplay between the two shadows projects Ivan's desire for world domination.

The shadow motif also figures significantly in Euphrosyne's poisoning of Anastasia. Immediately after appointing herself as assassin, she turns away from the camera and her face moves into shadow. Later, when a two-shot of Ivan and the shadow of the globe is intercut into the scene where Euphrosyne (garbed in black) is seated on Anastasia's bed (which is predominantly white), the juxtaposition makes us see the murderess as the evil shadow of the Queen. When Ivan enters Anastasia's chamber, he casts a shadow on the wall. His decline begins when he lowers himself to Anastasia, lying on her breast for consolation. In this feminine context and weakened posture, his shadow of power is subdued by the Boyar's betrayal, Kurbsky's defeat, and Anastasia's death. As the murderous Black Queen lurks below in the darkness, the White Queen lifts the cup and drinks the poison; the dark vessel blocks out her face and, through a fade, instantly transports her to the world of shadows.

The Funeral: Ivan's Second Resurrection

Ivan again descends to the nadir at Anastasia's funeral, where he returns to the humiliating postures he had assumed in the illness sequence. He is revived by two new strategies: his move to regain his Bishop (recalling his friend Kolychev from the monastery) and Basanov's idea of making a new use of his pawns (creating the Oprichniki, a personal guard of commoners who will owe their loyalty only to him). Though both moves will cause him grief in Part II, here they revive his spirit, making him rise and shout: "The Moscow Tsar is not broken yet" (p. 125). Most important, both moves inspire him to design the strategy that sets up the final coronation—his own deliberate retreat to win the loyalty, not only of a personal guard, but of the masses: "We shall come back summoned by the people . . . in that summons—I shall find power unlimited. A new annointing, that I shall use for the great cause" (pp. 128-9). Although the killing of Anastasia was designed to weaken Ivan, his isolation actually makes him stronger for it leads him to break all ties with his family and class and to create new bonds with the people. It ultimately results in an eroticizing of the final ceremony, in which he marries the masses who replace his dead bride.

The Final Coronation: Fetishization Achieved

In this final historic ascension, Ivan awaits news from Moscow. His hands are bejewelled as in the opening coronation. But instead of the traditional paraphernalia of the royal scepter and golden robes, his attendants hand him a long staff and garb him in a full-length fur coat which perhaps prepares him for the beastly acts to follow in Part II. When the serpentine line of pilgrims finally appears on the snowy plain (evoking the zigzagging line of soldiers under his command at Kazan), Ivan rises to his full height, towering "like a black shadow" (p. 134). Propped on his staff, his lone phallic figure looms in the foreground, arching around the vaginal aperture through which we see the coiled populace waiting to be dominated and ruled.

In another shot his huge bare head in profile, its triangular shape accentuated by his Roman nose and pointed beard, dominates

the foreground and the right half of the frame, while the faint line of his followers swirls deep into the left background. As in his earlier scenes of scheming, Ivan's singular mind and body rule the world, but his domination has fully materialized and is no longer cast in shadows. His conscious strategy of withholding himself from the masses in order to intensify their desire has succeeded in completing the total fetishization of both his head and body. Unlike Lincoln, the Tsar in his final appearance is not seated and restrained, but fully erect and empowered, ready to unleash his full force in Part II. As in *Young Mr. Lincoln,* we see the denial of sexuality in the service of a moralized discourse of political power, but here more directly rooted in the dynamics of desire.

In contrast to Part I in which all of the ritualized sequences echo and reinforce the framing coronations, Part II is structured around a series of mock coronations: the opening satiric sequence in the chessboard Livonian court where Kurbsky is falsely empowered for his treachery against Ivan; the disrobing of the boy Tsar in the flashback to his childhood when Ivan was still only a figurehead; the Tsar's appearance in monk's robes at the Fiery Furnace play where he vows henceforth to live up to his name, Ivan the

Terrible; and the mock robing and annointment of Vladimir that cast him as a clownish stand-in for the victim in the assassination of the Tsar. At the height of his tyranny, Ivan is confronted by Philip (his old friend Kolychev from Part I, who now, as Metropolitan of Moscow, becomes one of Ivan's most potent enemies). Philip reproaches him by saying: "I cannot recognize the Tsar, neither by his clothes nor by his heathen deeds." Once the power of office has been fully transferred to Ivan's person, it no longer resides in tradition and no longer holds moral boundaries inviolate. That is why it is so easy for coronations to be mocked, robes discarded, and laws broken. The fetishization of the phallic hero is constructed as a perversion that inevitably spawns tyranny.

Although Ford and Eisenstein both use the visual icon of the phallic hero to direct the spectator's reading of the narrative, their readings of patriarchal power are quite different. While Ford asserts a symbolic phallic power for Lincoln, he minimizes or displaces both its sexual and violent components—by desexualizing the Oedipal configuration in the melodrama, by virtually omitting the Civil War from the historic context, and by stressing the seated figure of Lincoln in the visuals. *Young Mr. Lincoln* implies that these more threatening components of patriarchal power can be held in check. In contrast, Eisenstein presents brutal violence as an inevitable consequence of patriarchal power and uses sexuality as a temporary displacement for aggression—the fetishization of the phallic hero in Part I is only the prelude to Ivan's rampant display of totalitarian excesses in Part II. Made under the shadow of World War II, Eisenstein's *Ivan* may lead one to conclude that this potential danger is inherent in the "cult of personality" created around any national leader—be it an Ivan or Stalin, a Mussolini or Hitler, or even a Roosevelt or Lincoln.

NOTES

1. Sergei Eisenstein, *Film Essays and a Lecture,* ed. by Jay Leyda. New York: Praeger, 1970, pp. 140 & 149. According to Leyda, Eisenstein's essay was written in 1945 for a volume on Ford in the World Film Art series. The volume was never published because a change in policy discontinued the series. Eisenstein's essay was published posthumously.

2. Editors of *Cahiers du Cinéma,* "John Ford's *Young Mr. Lincoln,*" originally published in 1970 in *Cahiers du Cinéma,* reprinted in *Movies and Methods,* ed. Bill Nichols. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976, pp. 493-529.

3. Following the success of *Alexander Nevsky,* Eisenstein contemplated shooting various subjects. Some were just talked about; others had treatments or even scripts, which he prepared. But in the end, none was produced. However varied they were, not one was acceptable to Stalin. Then came the dictator's decision—that Eisenstein should make *Ivan the Terrible,* but as the story of a positive historical character, despite the fact that up to the Stalin era, Ivan had been portrayed by all Marxist historians—let alone others—as a cruel tyrant, a fratricidal murderer, a ruler *not* to be emulated. Eisenstein now had to portray the opposite, which he proceeded to do in Part I.

"Having faithfully followed the Party line, he continued and completed Part II of *Ivan.* When he submitted it to the Ministry of Cinematography, there was consternation and fear. It was clear that Eisenstein had shown Ivan as a paranoic murderer and drawn the parallel with Stalin." "Preface" to *Immoral Memories: An Autobiography by Eisenstein,* trans. by Herbert Marshall. Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1983, pp. xiv-xv.

4. Although Eisenstein noted that "the events of the film do not go as far as Lincoln's nationwide struggle for the unity of the country" (p. 142), he was even more concerned with the issue of the Great Emancipator's actual historical record.

> We attach to his name the emancipation of the Negro slaves, and the fortunate conclusion of the fratricidal war between the North and South. Reading history in closer detail, we learn that in these matters Lincoln conducted himself somewhat less decisively and courageously than we might have wished, and considerably more slowly and cautiously than now—looking back—would seem necessary. And we learn that the leadership of the Northern cause was not ultimately disinterested. We also know that after the war many of these liberators took their revenge by enslaving and exploiting not only Negroes but white slaves as well. ("Mr. Lincoln by Mr. Ford," pp. 143-4)

5. "Mr. Lincoln by Mr. Ford," p. 145.

6. *Eisenstein's* IVAN THE TERRIBLE: *A Neoformalist Analysis* (Princeton University Press, 1981), pages 53-64. I am unaware of any previous comparisons between *Young Mr. Lincoln* and *Ivan the Terrible.* Though Thompson makes extensive use of *Mary of Scotland,* she never mentions *Young Mr. Lincoln.* Though the *Cahiers* analysis of *Young Mr. Lincoln* mentions Eisenstein twice—once to cite an anecdote he told about Lincoln moving to Washington (which is quoted from "Mr. Lincoln by Mr. Ford" though the essay is not specifically named, p. 516) and again for a comparison with *The General Line* (p. 528), there is no reference to *Ivan the Terrible.*

7. Ron Abramson and Rick Thompson have also criticized the *Cahiers* analysis for its omission of visual codes and have provided an alternative reading that includes such visual components as Lincoln's iconic costume, eyes, and triangular compositions. Although their findings in no way anticipate my own, they also see Lincoln's character in a process of change and development, as opposed to the *Cahiers* model which presents Lincoln's character as static. See "*Young Mr. Lincoln* Reconsidered: An Essay on the Theory and Practice of Film Criticism," *Cine-Tracts,* II, 1 (Fall 1978), 42-62.

8. This question was already central in the Estabrook story outline.

> He went *from the bottom to the top.* How did he do it? The answer is a timely parallel of a modern question more vital than ever now; how can the common man get ahead? . . . We should maintain the underlying thread that carries the *greatness* of our theme, never losing the magic of the humble man who *rises above the herd* and then *reaches down to help others.* This is the *punch* that gives the picture "*size,*" and conveys the feeling that we are in the presence of one of the *great* men of the world. (p. 1).

The language in this passage (particularly the phrases I have underlined) clearly shows the valorizing of physical codes as a source of pleasure and success in the Hollywood industry's thinking.

9. *Cahiers* analysis, p. 515.

10. "The scandal of Lincoln's difference is even more noticeable to the spectators than to the characters of the scene. First it is apparent at the *physical* level, his shape, size, gait, rigidity, his undertaker look (Lincoln's mythical costume), then, while he is dancing, in the lack of co-ordination and rhythm in his movements." (*Cahiers* analysis, p. 516)

11. In both the "Temporary Script" (dated January 13, 1939) and the "Final Script" the rivalry in this scene between Lincoln and Douglas, both romantically and politically, is much stronger than in the film. Mary explicitly assesses their relative strength as aspiring politicians and as opponents in the coming trial. To Lincoln, she says of Douglas (who has been identified as "a life-long Democrat"): "Perhaps *he* will be the stronger" (p. 85). And in relation to the Clay trial, she says, "With Mr. Douglas advising the prosecution it will be—well, almost a test of strength between you, won't it?" (p. 87). This remark is bound to evoke the earlier weight-lifting contest in which Lincoln had successfully challenged the strongman Hercules (a scene that is replaced in the film by the rail-splitting and tug-of-war contests), particularly if one recalls the sarcastic remark Lincoln had made at Douglas' first appearance: "Here comes Mr. Stephen A. Douglas, the little Giant himself" (p. 31).

12. Eisenstein also noted the connection between Lincoln and Don Quixote.

You are surprised to observe what accurate intuition and skill were shown by the pleasant-looking young Henry Fonda in transforming himself into this Don Quixote, whose armour was the U.S. Constitution, whose helmet was the traditional top-hat of a small-town lawyer, and whose Rosinante was a placid little mule that he straddles, his long legs almost touching the ground. ("Mr. Lincoln by Mr. Ford," pp. 145-6)

The *Cahiers* critics describe Lincoln's friend Efe as "a sort of Sancho Panza, who is at his side in a number of scenes in the film" (p. 521).

13. The "Temporary Script" has several other allusions to the slavery issue that don't appear in the film:

(1) At the circus sequence, Mary reveals her tacit support of Slavery: "Sister says I'll never really be happy until I marry a man who'll be President. But I tell her I'd rather marry a *good* man with a *good* mind who has a chance to be *famous,* than to marry any *other* man, even though he had all the *negroes* and *gold* in the world" (p. 32). This compromising remark is still present in the "Final Script."

(2) The attractions in the circus sequence (later changed to the Fair) include "THREE PRIZE DARKIES, banjo players and singers, guaranteed to 'move every ear with delight and every soul with ecstasy'." (p. 36). These "darkies" remain in the "Final Script."

(3) In a final "mystical" scene in which Lincoln talks to a mysterious "voice" that may be God or himself, Lincoln refers to his Gettysburg speech and to the "nearly fifty thousand men (who) fell there, . . . both sides," and the voice replies: "But it's a free country—and I don't just mean slavery. The finest democracy on earth!" (pp. 155-56). The mystical voice and its allusions to the Civil War are gone from the "Final Script."

14. This final accusation was suggested by Zanuck at the January 23rd story conference.

Mr. Zanuck feels that we have missed completely on the windup of the trial. It is sloughed off too quickly and leaves a lot of questions unanswered. Mr. Zanuck outlined the kind of scene we should have here, but pointed out that his dialogue was crudely suggested. (p. 5)

What follows in the notes is almost precisely what exists in the film version—with minor adjustments in the dialogue. However, the key line that refers to the visual code of the body, "Your body hid what you were doing," is *not* included in Zanuck's suggestions.

15. The ending agreed upon in the January 23rd story conference (and executed in the "Final Script") was even smoother than the film version in moving between the two iconic images of Lincoln.

The scene of the young Lincoln riding along becomes less distinct—while the Memorial becomes clearer and clearer, finally completely obliterating the other. (p. 6)

In the film the historic image from the Memorial quite literally fills the gap left by the young Lincoln when he abandons the frame.

16. Thompson, p. 173.

17. "A Dialectic Approach to Film," in *Film Form* (Cleveland and New York: Meridian Books, 1957), p. 61.

18. "Mr. Lincoln by Mr. Ford," p. 143.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 140.

20. I have never been convinced by Brian Henderson's argument in "Two Types of Film Theory" (in *A Critique of Film Theory,* New York: Dutton, 1980) that Eisenstein had no cinematic theory of the whole that was not dependent on literary models. I would argue that his theory of the dominant would certainly qualify as a non-literary theory of the whole. Eisenstein's appreciation of the "astonishing harmony" of *Young Mr. Lincoln* as well as his own design of *Ivan* show such a theory in practice.

21. In Eisenstein's original conception (preserved in the published screenplay), Part I opens with a prologue which, like Ford's opening poem, presents an image of the young hero that lies outside the events depicted in the diegesis and raises hermeneutic questions concerning the youth's future political empowerment in the context of his emotional ties to his dead mother. Both the screenplay and the film end with Ivan's final ascension, which, like the closing image of Lincoln, is situated in a national monument (the Alexandrov Liberty).

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23. Ivan's decline also opens a space in the foreground for the adulterous desires and political ambitions of his friendly rival Kurbsky, who plays a role that is somewhat analogous to that of Stephen Douglas in *Young Mr. Lincoln.*

24. *Immoral Memories,* p. 226.

25. *Ibid.*, pp. 159-60.

Reviews

EUREKA

Director: Nicolas Roeg. Script by Roeg and Paul Mayersberg, from Marshall Houts's novel "Murder in the Caribbean." Photography: Alex Thomson. Producer: Jeremy Thomas. MGM/UA Classics.

INSIGNIFICANCE

Director: Nicolas Roeg. Script: Terry Johnson, from his own play. Producer: Jeremy Thomas. Photography: Jeremy Thomas. Island Alive.

Eighteen years after the release of *Performance,* Nicolas Roeg's films continue to baffle many audiences with their splintered editing patterns, their relentless inserting of fragments from their characters' pasts, their constant folding and twisting of linear continuity into Moebius strips. Yet he has stated his objective plainly (to Harlan Kennedy in

9. *Cahiers* analysis, p. 515.

10. "The scandal of Lincoln's difference is even more noticeable to the spectators than to the characters of the scene. First it is apparent at the *physical* level, his shape, size, gait, rigidity, his undertaker look (Lincoln's mythical costume), then, while he is dancing, in the lack of co-ordination and rhythm in his movements." (*Cahiers* analysis, p. 516)

11. In both the "Temporary Script" (dated January 13, 1939) and the "Final Script" the rivalry in this scene between Lincoln and Douglas, both romantically and politically, is much stronger than in the film. Mary explicitly assesses their relative strength as aspiring politicians and as opponents in the coming trial. To Lincoln, she says of Douglas (who has been identified as "a life-long Democrat"): "Perhaps *he* will be the stronger" (p. 85). And in relation to the Clay trial, she says, "With Mr. Douglas advising the prosecution it will be—well, almost a test of strength between you, won't it?" (p. 87). This remark is bound to evoke the earlier weight-lifting contest in which Lincoln had successfully challenged the strongman Hercules (a scene that is replaced in the film by the rail-splitting and tug-of-war contests), particularly if one recalls the sarcastic remark Lincoln had made at Douglas' first appearance: "Here comes Mr. Stephen A. Douglas, the little Giant himself" (p. 31).

12. Eisenstein also noted the connection between Lincoln and Don Quixote.

You are surprised to observe what accurate intuition and skill were shown by the pleasant-looking young Henry Fonda in transforming himself into this Don Quixote, whose armour was the U.S. Constitution, whose helmet was the traditional top-hat of a small-town lawyer, and whose Rosinante was a placid little mule that he straddles, his long legs almost touching the ground. ("Mr. Lincoln by Mr. Ford," pp. 145-6)

The *Cahiers* critics describe Lincoln's friend Efe as "a sort of Sancho Panza, who is at his side in a number of scenes in the film" (p. 521).

13. The "Temporary Script" has several other allusions to the slavery issue that don't appear in the film:

(1) At the circus sequence, Mary reveals her tacit support of Slavery: "Sister says I'll never really be happy until I marry a man who'll be President. But I tell her I'd rather marry a *good* man with a *good* mind who has a chance to be *famous,* than to marry any *other* man, even though he had all the *negroes* and *gold* in the world" (p. 32). This compromising remark is still present in the "Final Script."

(2) The attractions in the circus sequence (later changed to the Fair) include "THREE PRIZE DARKIES, banjo players and singers, guaranteed to 'move every ear with delight and every soul with ecstasy'." (p. 36). These "darkies" remain in the "Final Script."

(3) In a final "mystical" scene in which Lincoln talks to a mysterious "voice" that may be God or himself, Lincoln refers to his Gettysburg speech and to the "nearly fifty thousand men (who) fell there, . . . both sides," and the voice replies: "But it's a free country—and I don't just mean slavery. The finest democracy on earth!" (pp. 155-56). The mystical voice and its allusions to the Civil War are gone from the "Final Script."

14. This final accusation was suggested by Zanuck at the January 23rd story conference.

Mr. Zanuck feels that we have missed completely on the windup of the trial. It is sloughed off too quickly and leaves a lot of questions unanswered. Mr. Zanuck outlined the kind of scene we should have here, but pointed out that his dialogue was crudely suggested. (p. 5)

What follows in the notes is almost precisely what exists in the film version—with minor adjustments in the dialogue. However, the key line that refers to the visual code of the body, "Your body hid what you were doing," is *not* included in Zanuck's suggestions.

15. The ending agreed upon in the January 23rd story conference (and executed in the "Final Script") was even smoother than the film version in moving between the two iconic images of Lincoln.

The scene of the young Lincoln riding along becomes less distinct—while the Memorial becomes clearer and clearer, finally completely obliterating the other. (p. 6)

In the film the historic image from the Memorial quite literally fills the gap left by the young Lincoln when he abandons the frame.

16. Thompson, p. 173.

17. "A Dialectic Approach to Film," in *Film Form* (Cleveland and New York: Meridian Books, 1957), p. 61.

18. "Mr. Lincoln by Mr. Ford," p. 143.

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INSIGNIFICANCE

Director: Nicolas Roeg. Script: Terry Johnson, from his own play. Producer: Jeremy Thomas. Photography: Jeremy Thomas. Island Alive.

Eighteen years after the release of *Performance,* Nicolas Roeg's films continue to baffle many audiences with their splintered editing patterns, their relentless inserting of fragments from their characters' pasts, their constant folding and twisting of linear continuity into Moebius strips. Yet he has stated his objective plainly (to Harlan Kennedy in

American Film, January-February 1980): "Thought can be transferred by the juxtaposition of images, and you mustn't be afraid of the audience not understanding. You can say things *visually, immediately,* and that's where film, I believe, is going. It's not a pictorial example of a published work . . ."

Roeg's two latest movies, *Eureka* and *Insignificance,* carry on this project, but with a new perspective. Suddenly, the hyper-visual Roeg has become involved with theatrical, aphoristic, thematically pointed dialogue, and lots of it. In *Eureka,* for instance, the staggeringly rich gold-prospector-turned-Caribbean-recluse Jake McCann (Gene Hackman) speaks explicitly and lengthily to his wife about how the stunning Yukon gold strike that won him his fortune fifteen years earlier has changed his life—no complicated montages, no subliminal shots or unexpected cutaways, no visualization at all other than the shadows of a marital bedroom as Jake muses about finding himself perched at the edge of eternity, beyond which lies "the abyss, nothing. . . ." After thugs who want to take over Jake's island lair murder him, his son-in-law, Claude Maillot van Horn (Rutger Hauer), on trial for the killing, cross-examines his wife Tracy (Theresa Russell) about her father. As this scene develops, the rest of the courtroom gradually vanishes, leaving them alone together, theatrically spotlighted, to *talk* out their concerns. *Insignificance* began as theater, a 1982 play by Terry Johnson (also the movie's screenwriter) which imagines what might have happened if four "icons" of American celebrityhood—an Actress (Theresa Russell), a Professor (Michael Emil), a Senator (Tony Curtis), and a Ballplayer (Gary Busey), derived from Marilyn Monroe, Albert Einstein, Joseph McCarthy, and Joe DiMaggio—had met in a New York hotel room during "a dog of a night" in 1954. In filming the play, Roeg has packed it with his customary weavings and joltings of imagery, yet he has also remained faithful to it as a theatrical piece whose central element is dialogue. Not that this is an entirely new development in his work. He once said of Edward Bond's script for *Walkabout,* "It had no scenic detail, nothing—it was a play . . . just fourteen pages of handwritten notes. They were *exactly* what I wanted." But like the rest of his earlier work, *Walkabout* is verbally sparse. The recent films overflow with lines in a way that may herald a fresh approach to his stated goal.

EUREKA: *Gene Hackman as Jake, Theresa Russell as Tracy.*

Despite frustrating setbacks like the prolonged shelving of *Performance* (the same thing has happened to *Eureka,* too), the severe slashing by its distributor of *The Man Who Fell to Earth* (the original version has been in circulation for the past two or three years), and the minimal release of *Bad Timing* (also the fate of *Eureka*), Roeg's work has always bespoken his absolute confidence in what he is doing. Running variations on the "stranger in a strange land" theme, Roeg constantly plunges his characters into realms which completely disorient them, short-circuit all their emotional and mental wiring. Often, his heroes and heroines are rationalists with well worked-out mindsets about how existence functions. In different ways, James Fox's psychotic gangster in *Performance,* Jenny Agutter's prim high school student in *Walkabout,* Donald Sutherland's ironclad intellectual in *Don't Look Now,* and Art Garfunkel's complacent psychologist in *Bad Timing* have used their minds to build bulwarks against everything chaotic in life. When they must enter zones which embody that chaos (the lair of a pop singer who had made drugs his sacrament, the sere endlessness of the Australian outback, the fetid backwaters of Venice, the heart and mind of an alluring, fiercely unstable woman), their synapses misfire unnervingly as their scaffolds of thought and social conditioning collapse. In the end, either they confront the challenge of reconceiving their

identities or they slide into nullity, whether it be workaday domesticity suddenly haunted by lost opportunity (*Walkabout*) or gruesome death (*Don't Look Now*). *The Man Who Fell to Earth* flips this configuration around; its stranger, the alien Thomas Jerome Newton (David Bowie) is not "our representative," for the world he enters is our daily familiar. Unlike other Roeg protagonists, he has impressive powers which seem to promise him mastery of it. Yet even this prodigy must finally succumb to estranging entrapment within its vast indifference.

Using dialogue, for the most part, aphoristically in his earlier films, Roeg has placed his heaviest reliance on his personal brand of kaleidoscopic cutting, striving to make fragments of memory, fantasy, and portent blip in and out of the continuity without warning, chain-reacting upon one another, injecting masses of thoughts rapidly and directly into our consciousnesses without words and all their limitations. Generally, he presents these radar-like signals as cryptic signs which his traditionally rationalist characters either struggle vainly to comprehend or entirely ignore until it is too late. Sometimes, an apparent flashback proves to be a flashforward: the visions of the enigmatic red-coated tiny figure in *Don't Look Now,* apparently a hallucination at first of the hero's dead little girl, actually an omen of his own destruction; a sudden insert in *Insignificance* of the Actress smearing a bloody hand across a bathroom mirror, not another slice of her past but a harbinger of a forthcoming miscarriage. This technique is not automatically innovative. For instance, a recent hack job, *Cease Fire,* focuses on a tormented Vietnam veteran whose splintered memories of his wartime hell assemble neatly at last to reveal precisely what he has been repressing. This sort of patness also looms in Roeg's movies. At his worst, his inserting crudely slams messages at us; much as I love *Walkabout,* I always wince a bit at his quick cuts from the aborigine killing a kangaroo to a butcher in the city chopping meat. But at his more frequent best, the technique reconciles a belief that he shares with the Senator in *Insignificance*—that "everything fits"—with a parallel sense of a pervading mystery that quickens life when we least expect it, which can never be solved, only acknowledged and honored. When Roeg is working most acutely, he is using one of film's basic elements—the presentness of everything, including "flashbacks" and "flashforwards" —to conjure up the all-encompassing Now that William Faulkner meant when he said, "The past is not dead, it is not even past."

The first part of *Eureka* has an enraptured, visionary tone that is already classic. After under-the-credits images which make the Yukon a primeval dreamland, we locate Jake McCann fighting in blizzardy snow, as the camera circles overhead, with a couple of other prospectors who want to be his partners; a manic solipsist, he finally drives them away with the gutteral shout that becomes the leitmotif of his life: "I never earned a nickel from another man's sweat!" Afterwards, a Fred C. Dobbs wholly subsumed into his obsession, he trudges alone into a dilapidated gold rush shacktown, where he finds a frozen, demented effigy of himself lying in a drift; when this bedraggled madman abruptly puts a pistol barrel into his mouth and pulls the trigger, his shattering skull and brain form a slow-motion starburst. Jake sees the sign, but he doesn't read it. When his former lover Frieda (Helena Kallianiotes), a brothel madam fading from illness and the dregs of gold fever, tries to rekindle his humanity with memories of the coarsely vital sex they have shared, Jake leaves for the snowfields again; better to be a mote in their infinity than tied to a partner, any partner. Roeg and screenwriter Paul Mayersberg base the film on Marshall Houts's novel, *Murder in the Caribbean,* about the real-life case of a multi-millionaire, Sir Harry Oakes, who found a vast gold mine in Canada much the way Jake does; during the Second World War, he, too, was grotesquely murdered—a then celebrated, still unsolved killing, which some have speculatively linked to the movement of Lucky Luciano and Meyer Lansky to the Bahamas, where they wanted to establish a Caribbean Vegas. Roeg and Meyersberg work (indeed, labor) to suture sex, gold, and death into a tight mesh. Jake declares that "gold smells stronger than a woman." After receiving a flaming talisman from outer space one night while dozing half-deliriously in a cave-mouth, Jake stumbles onto his stupendous strike. It proves to be a pent-up underground keep of gold, and, freed by his pickax,

molten rivers, cascading falls, tumbling boulders of it rush over him and then explode through the snowcrust as if leaping for heaven. The connection to orgasm becomes all the clearer as the camera whirls, Roeg cuts in flashes to Frieda in her consumptive decline, and Jake staggers back to the earth's surface, exultant in the icefield, flakes and droplets of gold speckling him all over.

Despite the clumsy Jake–Frieda dialogue, which disfigures it cruelly, this sequence captures the fairy-tale quality of many accounts, legendary and otherwise, of how the fabled millionaires (not today's microchip wizards but the great robber barons of an earlier America like Andrew Carnegie or Jim Fisk, or such latter-day plutocrats as William Randolph Hearst and Howard Hughes) first hit their jackpots. Jake's joy over finally achieving his dream (which he had been clawing after for fifteen years) also evokes a fantasy that most of us probably still harbor at some level despite all the cautionary tales we have heard: that winning a genuine fortune would surely fulfill us perfectly and for all our lives, put us in nothing less than earthly heaven.

But cut to the same landscape several years later, during the forties, and we find a Jake showing the site of his triumph to Tracy, to whom he has just told the story the way we have just seen it. Now gray-haired and subdued, Jake has descended from the ecstatic peak of his life, which has since become a lengthy anticlimax. What has he done since and with his enormous score? Married, headily at first, now moribundly. Fathered a beloved, almost occultly close daughter now passionately married herself to Claude, whom he despises and distrusts. Established himself baronially beside a beatific tropical bay, a world diametrically unlike the Yukon, in a gated mansion called "Eureka" with a *Kane*-like "No Trespassing" sign. But beyond that? Jake has not become a financial power broker, a world traveller, a lavish socializer, a patron of the arts, or much of anything else that his swagpile would allow him to be. Instead, he squats on his hoard, waiting out World War II, psychically immobilized, a sense of disappointment with the consequences of his transcendent discovery slowly percolating toward a flashpoint.

Threaded through *Eureka* is a set of comparison/contrast references to *Citizen Kane*. Both Jake and Kane win immense fortunes by accident (though Kane never seeks his). But Kane works and strives in the great world, trying to *use* his money to reshape it, bend it to his will. Only after chastening failures in politics, the arts, and big business does he erect Xanadu, then entomb himself inside it. Jake seemingly goes straight to his self-isolation. Unlike Kane, for whom money is a means "to buy things" in the hope that each new thing will provide the catalyst to regained transcendence, Jake treats his money and other people's fascination with it contemptuously, even giving nuggets of it to guests like after-dinner mints; his Xanadu, though luxurious enough, is no palace. What really moves Jake is something he lost irretrievably in the very instant of its fulfillment: the raw, coursing ferocity of his old obsession. That is his Rosebud. Now it is Tracy who possesses this transfiguring power, but in a romantic and sexual form. Jake's line about gold and women ends up mocking him, for sexual and romantic intensity, though even more evanescent than goldlust and maybe small, even pathetic by comparison, is renewable. But the grand luminescence that Jake experienced is gone forever, and he knows it. *Eureka* ends up examining the slow rekindling of his old desire in the only form that, given his limitations, it can take: his own death. Finally, Jake does read the blips on his personal screen, and they tell him that he has been trying to commit suicide in hope of regaining his vanished paradise of consuming intensity. Deciphering the message, Jake embraces it. When the goons, who work for an entrepreneurial hood (Joe Pesci) whose buy-out offers Jake has been recklessly ridiculing, invade Eureka, Jake lures them onward gleefully, almost vamping them, at last goading them into not merely murdering him but massacring him, burning and pulping his corpse as though to drive it back into some primordial state.

Marshalling the full panoply of Roegian visual strategies as it labors for a purchase on themes like this, *Eureka* is a fascinating blend of dazzle and maladroitness. Take the casting, for instance. Joe Pesci (Jake LaMotta's brother in *Raging Bull*) as a Lansky-like Jewish mobster? (And named Mayakovski?) Hauer as a Frenchman? (Or should that be half-frenchman, given his full name?) Kallianiotes, with her raddled, abrasive Hollywood-lowlife

sluttiness as an Arctic whore? Miscasting like this has cropped up before in Roeg's work (Harvey Keitel as a Viennese police inspector in *Bad Timing* has been the oddest example to date), persistently enough to suggest that such off-center choices might be deliberate, perhaps a comment on the dissolving of different nationalities into one another, as Pesci gets to say in an enjoyably showy speech about how everyone in the world is now an American (a notion which pops up in *Insignificance* as well). But, for me anyway, it simply doesn't play except as an overdeliberate effort to pack in another thematic layer—a recurrent feature of Roeg's work, especially (and more successfully) in *The Man Who Fell to Earth* and *Insignificance.*

Although Jake's relationships with Claude and Tracy are saturated with visual clues (Claude wears a shirt covered with cabala signs; a gold chain suddenly falls on Tracy's dresser, like the priest's bicycle in Alfred Hitchcock's *I Confess,* to cite just two) never come to life. Claude arrests our attention at the outset by making us wait to learn whether he is a true alternative to Jake's outlook or just a fortune-hunting poseur. His comment that Jake merely raped the land to get the gold is provocative, especially when he goes Jake one better in contempt by swallowing his own dinnertable nugget. Eventually, we learn that Claude has guiltily abandoned Occupied France and his mother rather than join the Resistance, but this revelation never takes on resonance. Upon discovering him in bed with Tracy, Jake tries to kill him with a cleaver, shouting that Claude wants not his fortune but his soul. The concept of soul-theft and soul mates pervades the movie. Roeg has called Tracy Jake's "soul clone"; he certainly intends the incestuous tinge that clings to their bond, which he further highlights with such touches as their shared gift for elaborate mental mathematics. But, like the entire role of Claude, this idea remains humanly stillborn. The one truly sustained father-daughter scene comes when Tracy, covering Claude with her body to protect him from the enraged Jake, cries out that she wants flesh, not gold, that it is love rather than wealth which possesses her. What this overexplicit dialogue amounts to is a confession that all of Roeg's visual wizardry has, he fears, failed to "transfer thought" after all. And at times, his ear for line readings seems to have turned to tin. When even an underplayer as skilled as Gene Hackman has trouble putting across such dialogue as Jake's gold-woman statement (which perilously skirts camp) or his shouts to his wife to "lay off the sauce," the strain behind them becomes evident.

Yet this flawed grappling with words in a Nicolas Roeg movie has its own fascination, particularly in the trial scene, when the pyrotechnics of imagery and editing finally surrender to torrential words. In effect, Tracy explicates virtually everything that the movie wants to convey about Jake, love, death, and time. Once, when Claude fails to grasp something she says, Tracy even throws up her hands and moans petulantly, and the moment, by normal aesthetic standards a clear lapse in Theresa Russell's performance, becomes eerily touching as well as comic because it seems to sum up some level of doubt that Roeg may harbor about his arsenal of visual strategies (vastly more numerous than any review can trace).

Becuase it began as a stage play, *Insignificance* must confront the interplay between words and Roeg's visual methods more directly, and it does so with heartening success. In adapting Johnson's work, Roeg has mingled faithfulness to its stage dimensions with his customary editorial fragmentation. The Professor's hotel room is the principal locale, with forays to a Manhattan street where the Actress shoots a dress-lifting scene à la *The Seven-Year Itch,* a toy store she impulsively visits later, a bar where the Senator and the Ballplayer drink separately, and the hotel's elevator and roof, where an Indian elevator operator (Will Sampson) observes the nutty comings and goings with bemused relish. Roeg's "opening up" takes the form of visual clusters that leap onto the characters like iron filings onto magnets: individual, sometimes shared motifs, snippets of wounding memories.

Even before they meet, for example, watches link the Professor and the Actress. The first thing we see is a watch floating in a void, like the sexualized alien bodies in *The Man Who Fell to Earth.* The Actress borrows a watch from her chauffeur, loses another during childhood when orphanage mates take it away from her and throw it down a grate. The Pro-

fessor keeps popping open his pocket watch as he tries to continue working on his theories about the shape of time and space, all the while beset not only by the Senator, who is threatening him with a HUAC-like public interrogation, but also by a fear that, as the Actress says to him later, "it might be later than you think." Roeg's editing and framings also associate the Actress with her billowing movie dress in a multi-faceted way. White and airy, it becomes an emblem of her chiffon stardom, as well as the whoriness that she fears is overtaking her career and her life. Yet it also embodies her giddy willingness to plunge into "what the hell" risks on the off chance that they may yield a little human warmth. Roeg connects the Professor to the loose sheets of his manuscript, which in turn connect (via the swirling curtains in his hotel room) with the blowing sails of a boat he once owned, as Nazi hoodlums destroy it. A recurrent focus on his spindly legs (the Actress comically demands to see them after making good on her promise to demonstrate the Theory of Relativity to him) matches up with a parallel attention to the Actress's star-fantasy body. The Ballplayer's visual signatures are baseball cards (in one funny scene, he reels off the thirteen bubble gum series which have featured his picture so far), bits of his old diamond heroics, and media images of the Actress, his estranged wife (whom he can see any time, he says bitterly, by just going to the movies). The Senator's motifs mingle shit, Catholicism, and guilt-ridden sex. Such imagery saturates the movie, yet Terry Johnson's brash, lively dialogue remains dominant. The two approaches to the material sound certain to clash, but they spark each other surprisingly well. As a result, the movie has not only Roeg's customarily bracing alertness but, in tandem with its seriousness, a toylike sense of play as well that is new to his work.

The Actress, the Professor, the Ballplayer, the Senator—why not just call them Monroe, Einstein, DiMaggio, McCarthy? Legalities reportedly bar this (Joe DiMaggio is still alive), but, as things turn out, being too quick to match these generic figures with their real-life models would be a mistake. Perhaps influenced by writings like E.L. Doctorow's *Ragtime* or Tom Stoppard's *Travesties* (in which James Joyce, Tristan Tzara, and Lenin meet, although they never did in real life), Johnson has woven, and Roeg has extended, an intricate cat's cradle interplay among these actual individuals and fictional mockups of them. For instance, just when we have gotten used to thinking of the Actress as Monroe, we and the Ballplayer see the real Monroe in a bar, in the form of her naked sprawl across red satin for the calendar that helped to launch her career. When the Actress and the Senator finally meet (after we have seen him reading an issue of *Photoplay* with Monroe on the cover), he refuses to believe that she is really Monroe (whose name is never spoken) and takes her for a mere lookalike, like a hooker who tries to service him earlier. Offering "one sexual favor" if the Senator will not impound the Professor's calculations, she, in turn, says, "What the hell, it's not me you want, it's her, right?" Even the plainest references to the actual Marilyn Monroe (the *Seven-Year Itch* scene; the orphanage flashbacks; the copy of *The Brothers Karamazov* in the Professor's room, which refers to her dream of playing Grushenka; even the casting of Tony Curtis, who famously said that working with Monroe in *Some Like It Hot* was like kissing Hitler) act like quotation marks around her unuttered name, for they have long since been subsumed into what passes for myth in pop culture. Similarly, we match the Professor right away with Einstein, the Ballplayer with DiMaggio, the Senator with McCarthy not because of what we learn about them as actual people but because each sports the visual and aural details (*Bride of Frankenstein* fright wig and dithering air, beefcake physique and doofus manner, five o'clock shadow and sweaty growl) which "place" them in the pop pantheon. In playing off its generic mockups against their real-life sources without absolutely merging them, *Insignificance* demonstrates how celebrities, no matter how they get to be celebrities, always tend to become lowest-common-denominator self-parodies. In essence, the "significance" that they pursue or that clings to them causes their human particularities to vanish in the public mind, and perhaps their own minds, as a few features of how they look or talk or dress transform them into icons of collective longings and hatreds, stripping them of their individuality (always with their own connivance) even while ostensibly exalting it. Roeg and Johnson begin with their status as types, gradually break it

down with a wealth of enlivening, individualizing details, but finally leave them still ensnared in their pop roles.

As the lone woman in this quartet and the only character with direct connections to each of the others, the Actress becomes the heart of the material (Theresa Russell's performance beautifully merges close mimicry of Monroe's public traits with her own brand of coltish emotional directness). At first, she is simply stardom incarnate, which everyone wants to ogle and touch. We join two crewmen operating the wind machine that will raise her dress for her movie; like them, we get to look up that dress and catch tantalizing glimmers of that heralded starbody (though not yet her face). And like them, we believe—or recall what it was like to believe—that "stars make you feel like you can do anything." But when she barges in on the Professor at two in the morning, she explains that she wanted to meet him because of her certainty that he, as a fellow celebrity, will understand the crazinesses of fame. The relationship that arises between them reworks an old chestnut, hayseed-meets-femme-fatale, but rings beguiling changes on it by making both sophisticated in their own realms but goofily childlike away from them. Above all, the Actress wants to *talk*—seriously, deeply. To most people (taking their cue from her generic standing as a Dumb Blonde Bimbo), this means that she just wants to chatter (as the Ballplayer amusingly complains, "She can talk through the entire World Series"), and at first she thinks that the Professor, too, is patronizing her. But, knowing what it feels like to be isolated inside a generic role and steadfastly determined to avoid snap judgments (Michael Emil unerringly keeps the Professor's confusion and his idealism in balance), he puts her at ease, and she responds by acting out his Theory of Relativity, on the hotel room floor with toy trucks, soldiers, and a flashlight—a wonderful set piece of *Ragtime*-style comedy (it suggests a screwball variation on the novel's imaginary encounter between Henry Ford and J. P. Morgan) not just because it's laugh-out-loud funny but because it teases out the core of sweet tenderness in this material, summed up in her hope that she and the Professor can "come together somehow in the middle of all this."

However, that goal remains elusive for all of them, and it is astonishing to witness how

INSIGNIFICANCE: *A lesson in relativity.*

touching this becomes amid the film's comic riffs on fame and its discontents. When the Ballplayer trails her to the room, mistaking the Professor for one more shrink she has seduced, the Actress turns cruel, calling him a moron before the Professor, rejecting his overtures for healing intimacy with him even after revealing her own to the Professor. In effect, she yearns to escape her generic role but refuses to perceive his identical desire. The Ballplayer does, in fact, break free occasionally (Gary Busey is particularly effective at revealing the canniness inside his luggy goofiness); he grasps the contradiction in her fantasy of being worshipped by millions yet simultaneously left alone, and he shrewdly points up how his face and voice make him only seem stupid, "which gives me a great deal of time to think." Still, the movie's saddest interlude finds the Actress and the Ballplayer lying quietly in the Professor's bed as their old feelings for one another fade. For all his visual fireworks, Roeg has a distinctive feeling for moments when both members of a couple sense that their love has been permanently lost, and here, paradoxically, these two generic figures become most human precisely when they realize that they can never again come together as they once did because, even after Roeg and Johnson have revivified them with a wealth of imaginative, humane details, they know that they are, in a deep sense, no longer people, only effigies. (We last see the Ballplayer on another baseball card, and instead of his name, we read "The Ballplayer" on it.) Though Tony Curtis has something of his old "avidly, avidly" spirit as the Senator, Roeg cannot muster quite the same degree of empathy for this sweaty political backstabber that the others arouse in him (the subliminal shots of his altar boy days seem like after-

thoughts). Nevertheless, even the Senator, in his twisted way, also wants to "come together"; when they first meet, he actually tries to charm the Professor into cooperating with his Committee and supporting nuclear testing. All four are vassals to the "significance" of their goals and the fame their achievement of them has brought.

But what of insignificance? The Professor harbors visions of disaster, successively more detailed views of a destroyed city, evidently Hiroshima, for which, despite the Actress's sympathetic denial, he blames his own researches. His nightmare abruptly engulfs the entire planet while, preparing to leave the following morning, she mimes the day's shooting for him just as she did the Theory of Relativity. Sweeping into the hotel room, the firestorm reveals that everything does indeed fit; all the iconic details that have flown at us before this moment now swirl together, consumed in the annihilating cataclysm. Just before throwing his pages out the window to scatter across Manhattan so that the Senator will not be able to confiscate them, the Professor says that what a man does, not what he believes, is important, and this, in effect, is what collective humanity believes; self-destruction curls and gnaws within its vitals like Jake McCann's secret suicide part with himself.

Were this all, the movie would be tritely moralistic. But something apparently frail, even trivial, has also been moving through it, something which prevails, at least aesthetically, over even atomic fire in the end. Roeg's editing and allusions continually direct our attention to the Professor's interest in the nature of time, the shape of space, the speed of light. For a while, they seem like just part of his generic baggage. But Roeg has been steadily working them into the movie's texture. He manipulates time early on by intercutting the Actress and the Professor undressing with the Ballplayer heading for the hotel room. In "reality," they would be naked and in bed together long before his arrival; but, by manipulating the speeds of the footage he is mingling, Roeg makes him get there just when she is about to reveal her fabled bust to the Professor and to us. In a lighter vein, when the Professor asks the Actress if it is early or late, she grins and quips, "It's relative." The film's continual amused *play* with time and other primal enigmas represents its token of hopefulness, its counterweight to despair. When both the Actress and the Senator state that nuclear war will never happen because think of what it would do to all that prime real estate, we may snicker, yet Roeg ends up oddly allied to their blithe optimism. He demonstrates this conclusively after letting the nuclear holocaust run its course by abruptly reversing the sequence, revealing it to be the Professor's fearful projection—horrifying yet only a dream (and a pasted-together strip of celluoid bits), and one, despite everything, that is not inevitably our future. Instead of devastation, the movie leaves us with the Actress's gorgeous, silly blonde in incandescence as, in her whispery voice, she coos a breathy "Bye" to the Professor and the frame freezes (more of time's relativity) on her waving hand. Insignificance, even in the form of this flyspeck of a gesture, becomes significant, even under the pall of the Professor's bomb.

In keeping with Roeg's new interest in verbal directness, the Professor earlier states his and the film's credo: Thinking means not defining anything once and for all but "turning over the possibilities." "If I say I know," he adds, "I stop thinking." What he hopes to do is simply to "approach some truth." A wordless vignette—the Indian elevator operator murmuring a soft chant on the hotel roof as dawnlight washes over the city—becomes its visual companion. Words and light—one says something, the other shows everything. Roeg's new interest in how they can serve one another is a most promising development in a body of work that is already surpassingly imaginative. —MICHAEL DEMPSEY

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"Conference on the Semiotics of the Cinema" in 1984 was when Teresa de Lauretis, a co-organizer and featured speaker, told a large, appreciative audience that the enormous pioneering advances made in film theory generally by feminist film criticism still had not gained full acceptance within the academic establishment. To her, the near total absence of any reference to feminist work in Dudley Andrew's new book, a book with the apparently all-embracing title of *Concepts in Film Theory,* a work intended to address developments since 1965, exemplified this continuing marginalization perfectly. Though de Lauretis's own position of empowerment suggested that feminist work had certainly gained considerable recognition within the academy, her attack also provides a useful entry point into a work that does not deserve to be dismissed summarily. Dudley Andrew has provided us with a valuable guide to main currents within the dominant structuralist and poststructuralist approaches to film and also proposes a distinct alternative. De Lauretis is quite right to say that Andrew scarcely mentions feminist work explicitly. She is not quite right to conclude, however, that feminist work is not accounted for in Andrew's scheme.

Andrew's subject is the poststructuralist mainstream but his discussion of it involves far wider reference to theorists outside of film (Genette, Jacobson, Lévi-Strauss, Freud, Lacan, Gombrich, Ricoeur, and so on) than within, where the names of Metz, Heath, Bellour, Kuntzel and a few others stand for the cinematic application of more general principles. The references to the basic poststructural paradigm subsume, in Andrew's view, most of the recent feminist writing whose absence de Lauretis decried. In other words, feminist work is not ignored, it is instead lumped together with the project initiated by poststructuralism generally. The specific contributions of feminist criticism are not Andrew's concern; indeed, his assumption is that insofar as feminist criticism has adopted the terms, methods and purposes of poststructuralism as he describes it, his account of the latter establishes the basic limits of the former as well. For some elements of feminist work Andrew's assumption may well be correct. What remains to be asked is whether he gives an adequate account of poststructuralism in general, whether he positions feminist work carried out within this project appropriately, and whether he acknowledges a diversity among feminist approaches, some of which have struggled for institutional empowerment no less dramatically than the phenomenological-hermeneutics that Andrew champions.

The most fundamental assumption, and one which disquiets Andrew as well as many others, is the tendency for structuralism and poststructuralism to assume that it can rise above the field of history to announce determining principles that govern textual production, that it can classify and analyze in accordance with an ahistorical conception of ideology which muffles those other voices and other meanings that texts hold in store for us. A diagnostics of ideology and system displaces a responsiveness to creativity and art. The cinema, Andrew suggests, is a medium of excess to which constraints must be applied. Perception, representation, signification, narrative structure, adaptation, valuation, identification—each term has a chapter in his book—represent the mechanisms that contain excess, holding it to those conditions that ideology and system will permit and that poststructuralism can specify. But an excess still escapes. In his last two chapters Andrew locates that excess in figuration itself, particularly metaphor, and in a hermeneutics that has trained itself to name the unnameable. Hermeneutics guides us toward what we have to do "when we do not understand what we read" (p. 179), where our passion for system is tempered by the peculiarities of the text, where "the body of films and the flesh of their figures have intervened in the airy 'sciences of man'" (p. 190).

Andrew is certainly correct in his characterization of poststructural film theory; it belongs fully to the school of suspicion—including the suspicion that nothing escapes ideological determination. Andrew holds out, eloquently and passionately, for that "something else" outside material determination, a "something else" that appears to belong to the domain of the transcendental or spiritual but that remains utterly fundamental to *any* non-deterministic view of history, change and the work of art. In reminding us of this, Andrew contributes, valuably, to a project of placing brackets around a poststructuralism that has

had the hubris to announce itself as the ultimate determination, the final word on text, discourse and its production.

The feminist film theory that Andrew includes by extension, has, to him, exhibited, above all, the poststructuralist preoccupation with ideology and system, with structure and its determination. He provides a single citation that refers to *Camera Obscura* magazine in relation to study of the "key role played by sexual difference in narration" but even here the feminist intervention becomes subordinated to a structuralist impulse since Andrew suggests that the magazine has concerned itself less with "repressive ideology" and more with "the dynamics of sexual markings within the smallest units of narrative." The value and limitations of the feminist contribution become at one with those of a virtual particle physics of narrative structure, something which Andrew sees as useful if not necessary, but decidedly not sufficient. Likewise, he refers to the work of Chantal Akerman and Yvonne Rainer (without mention of titles) as part of a broader poststructural effort to alter "the very forms of representation," a point that Andrew illustrates in greater detail via discussion of Stephen Heath's article, "The Question Oshima," on Oshima's film *In the Realm of the Senses.*

In so far as Andrew correctly identifies the structuralist influences in recent feminist work, that work would seem fully subject to his criticisms of the domain from which it derives. There are some problems though, including the degree to which this form of feminist theory has not been the only one and the question of what kind of history of ideas it is that omits the activity of dissent or debate in the rise and fall of critical methods. Even more critical is the question of how accurately Andrew criticizes poststructuralism itself and what consequences this has for his inclusion of feminist work as a dependent of it.

Concepts of Film Theory is clearly not a book intended as an apology for poststructuralism generally, quite the contrary. Andrew writes, "How can the study of an individual film be important to anyone who senses the single voice of ideology emanating from every film?" More than anything else, exhaustive, intricate theories of textual system distinguish the rich ideological readings of poststructuralism from those of the sociological Marxism that preceded it, at least in North America. But Andrew sees the constant return to an ideological referent, however complex, as reductive in a way that the continual circling toward the mysteries of creativity and expression are not. Poststructural readings remain yoked to the preexisting terms of analysis: work, the production of meaning, ideology, the positioning and interpellation of the spectator. Something else is needed, an approach "taking its cue from films and history rather than dominating these" (p. 108). The way in which Dudley Andrew reformulates what is at stake in one of the central feminist texts in the poststructuralist canon is quite revealing in this regard.

Andrew takes up Laura Mulvey's "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" in some detail and summarizes some of its argument. He writes that narrative cinema "appeals to the ego drives of narcissism via the enlarged figures with whom we identify on screen" (p. 147), and that, in conclusion, "The narrative cinema is designed precisely to exploit the characteristics of our psychic life, most prominently the valences of sexual difference which obsess us" (p. 148). This interpretation of Mulvey's argument helps prepare us for the three-part hermeneutics that Andrew sketches out later in the book where understanding, as precondition, and explanation, as necessary but insufficient, regain the ground of synthesis and abiding, inexhaustible richness through "comprehension," where "Figures are the cries we cannot dismiss. What we do with them (fuse with them, enjoy them, analyze them, extend them, and so forth) is as varied as the variety of interpreters and theories of interpretation" (p. 190). Acknowledging the constant tug exerted by our obsessions with the valences of sexual difference would certainly be one dimension of comprehension; it is not, however, exactly the point Mulvey was getting at.

In points that pertain directly to Andrew's statements, Mulvey writes that the male star represents, for the *male* viewer, a "more perfect, more complete, more powerful ideal ego conceived in the original moment of recognition in front of the mirror." She goes on to note that "As the spectator identifies with the main male protagonist, he [sic] projects his

look onto that of his like, his screen surrogate, so that the power of the male protagonist as he controls events coincides with the active power of the erotic gaze." The article then goes on to dissect this erotic gaze, wielded by males, and its consequences for the representation of women in narrative cinema. Although the heart of the article lies in this continuation, the problem with Andrew's summary is already at hand. Andrew has replaced Mulvey's "he" with "we." And he has replaced a specific formulation of the ideal ego as an Imaginary construct ("more perfect, more complete") with an unsexed panoply of "enlarged figures." With this, Andrew has eviscerated Mulvey's point—turning the gendered viewer who occupies a very different position depending on its sexual identity into a generalized "we" and reducing the dynamics of the Imaginary to a fascination with "enlarged figures." If it is possible to ascribe a rhetorical strategy to this treatment of Mulvey's article, one that might be at work in other accounts as well, it would seem to be the desire to effect a recovery of richness and complexity ("the valences of sexual difference which obsess us") from a poststructural, feminist critique that tries to spell out the gender-specific nature of those obsessions in great detail. The "we" becomes a crucial term here, one that figures heavily in *Film in the Aura of Art* as well. "He," "she," and, particularly, "I," yield to the "we" of a hermeneutics that responds to the body of the work, to its distinctive incarnation, to its unique form of figuration as though this body were neuter. It is, remarkably, an unsexed body, a corpus without gender that invites response from "us"—the unsexed selves that have at least momentarily escaped the determinations of ideology and gender that make "us" the impossible fiction upon which humanism and hermeneutics founder.

Concepts of Film Theory may be part of a backlash against both poststructuralism and ideological criticism, the latter a code word for political criticism that pivots, relentlessly, to its critics, around the question of ideology. More positively, Andrew's book can be seen as a helpful contribution to "ferment in the field," to a spirit of open-ended inquiry and the challenging of positions that claim to speak the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. He is certainly not alone in expressing concern with the excesses of poststructuralism: many feminists, Marxists, and formalists have mounted such critiques. (Two of the most valuable are surely Frank Lentricchia's *Criticism and Social Change* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983) which, by means of a vigorous re-reading of Kenneth Burke, argues for textual criticism as the most important political *act* a university humanist can perform and Fredric Jameson's *The Political Unconscious* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1981) which argues for a political hermeneutics in contrast to both French poststructuralism and the phenomenological hermeneutics favored by Andrew.) But Andrew's book gives only a limited sense of being part of a continuing debate about the role, methods and value of criticism within film study itself. His primary alternatives, mainly Paul Ricoeur and Roland Barthes, are essentially imported. Missing is any extended reference to the debates and diversity that already exist in film study: the work of individuals like Teresa de Lauretis, Jane Gaines, Janet Staiger, Kristin Thompson, Constance Penley, Claire Johnston, Julia Lesage, Pam Cook, Ruby Rich, Linda Williams, Annette Kuhn, Julianne Burton, Ann Kaplan, Jane Feuer, Tania Modleski, Kaja Silverman, Judith Mayne, Christine Gledhill, Maureen Turim, Sylvia Harvey, Vivian Sobchack and Beverle Houston—to name just a few women critics—is either entirely omitted from this overview of contemporary theory or mentioned only in passing. As a result contemporary theory becomes almost entirely poststructuralist theory and poststructuralist theory becomes almost entirely the theory of Christian Metz, Stephen Heath and a few others. When poststructuralism becomes identified with so narrow and homogeneous a sample, is it any wonder then that something more is needed?

At times *Concepts of Film Theory* provides a helpful overview of the state of the field and a guide to the major nodal points of contemporary theory. Often, though, the summaries and descriptions assume prior knowledge, rendering the book less valuable as an introduction. (The discussion of narrative structure is particularly troublesome: Andrew refers to a debate between Barthes and Picard but provides no reference, and he goes to the pains

of reproducing an elaborate schema of Roman Jacobson's for classifying narrative elements, complete with E^n's and E^nE^{ns}/E^s's, but without enough detail to make the schema clear from the account alone. The book is closer to a highly informative, carefully researched tour guide than to an introduction, describing the main features of a given itinerary which we may then choose to study more intensively by other means.

And despite its value as a bracket around poststructuralism, *Concepts* also suffers from its lack of true commitment to the task of description. As with Andrew's transposition of Laura Mulvey's article into the key of complexity and ambiguity, there is often a rhetorical strategy at work that seeks to recover art from discursive strategies, meaning from signifying practices, value from narrative structure. In this ambition I would certainly join Dudley Andrew and share his dismay at the ahistorical, reductionistic grid that some poststructuralism, for all its elegance and complexity as theory, has ultimately imposed on our engagement with films. I would part company with an openness that hopes to take its cues from the films before it but that must often construct the very film and the plural subject ("we") that it seeks to discover in the act of encounter itself.

This process of construction, we might fear from *Concepts of Film Theory,* might be a series of rhetorical feints and exhortatory flourishes that could not satisfy its own criteria of complexity and openness. In this context, Andrew's companion text, *Film in the Aura of Art,* is a refreshing, indeed exhilarating, exercise in the very act of comprehension he figuratively describes in *Concepts* as "the expansion of the reader to the size of the text and its specific shape" (p. 182). These are not insistently personal readings that refuse to touch the ground of history (or ideology, industry and nation). Like Barthes's essay, "The Third Meaning," Andrew's masterful essays pay their respects to those meanings that can be named, while circling resourcefully toward those other meanings that a net of words (and concepts and figures) can only partially identify. These are meanings hinted at more than said, whispered and suggested rather than apprehended and booked. The sense of being placed before the text Andrew must construct in order to "comprehend" it recedes before the passion and persistence with which he appears to take from film after film the meanings that need to be heard at the horizon of any too easily determined explanation, of any strategy that would too readily swallow the particular as an example as the general. For me, it is the recurring absence of the gender-specific body, the body in which we perform or represent the sexed practices of our culture, that suggests construction most forcefully. Although Andrew acknowledges the centrality of the representation of women in most of the texts he reads, especially Mizoguchi, this representation tends to dissolve into some larger, more sublimatory figure beyond sexual identity. For example, what Andrew sees obsessing Mizoguchi (and his fictional representation of Utamaro) "is not the fleeting lives of the women, nor even the prints he makes of them, prints that are disposable and mass-produced; rather it is the activity of expression which through repetition and discipline is the way to vision and serenity" (p. 183).

In his studies of Griffith (*Broken Blossoms*), Murnau (*Sunrise*), Vigo (*L'Atalante*), Capra and Hollywood (*Meet John Doe*), Delannoy and the French cinema of quality (*La Symphonie Pastorale*), Bresson (*Diary of a Country Priest*), Olivier (*Henry V*), and works of Welles and Mizoguchi, Andrew offers his own enriching contribution to the modern project of textual analysis. In doing so, he probably achieves a more compelling rebuttal to poststructural methods in this book than in *Concepts.* Here we find not only discontent and the effort to define the logical limit of an approach that seeks to set the limits of all before it, but, far more important for the critical intelligence, an alternative approach, embodied and exemplified.

There are limits to logic and one of them is surely that critical response does not live by logic alone. Demonstrating the logical flaws in the work of Christian Metz, as Brian Henderson has done, or in the work of Stephen Heath, as Noël Carroll has done, does nothing to move us toward some other view. Most often we prefer an imperfect logic coupled to a purposeful, engaged methodology than the high ground of logic for its own sake. Seldom do we abandon a way of seeing the world until

some alternative vision is proposed for us. It is such alternatives, rather than polemic or "merely" logical deconstruction that will displace the (already overly homogenized) paradigm of poststructuralism from its position of imaginary, but also institutionally real, dominance as Other. For this reason alone, *Film in the Aura of Art* is an indispensable book.

At one point in *Concepts of Film Theory* Andrew reminds us of a fundamental asymmetry that exists between art and psychic fantasy such that we may be able to locate the psychic fantasy in the work of art, or mass culture, but we cannot locate the work of art in the psychic fantasy. Similarly it may be that there remains an asymmetry between theories like poststructuralism that can offer an explanation of ideology and others like hermeneutics that cannot. It is significant that Andrew offers no definition of ideology, let alone an explanation for it, nor an account of how it might enter into the "valences of sexual difference which obsess us" in a gender-specific manner. The choice would appear to be that we must repress it from consideration in order to "take from" films the messages they bear for us. Andrew's case against poststructuralism and his attempt to close the brackets on the days of its dominance would be all the stronger if he had given his alternative approach an equivalent power to address, and place, the work of ideology, a power that might elaborate a theory of how constraints differ from causes or "effects," how figuration and expression transform expectations even as they also build upon them, and how the construction of the subject within ideology leaves the "semiotic freedom" for a subjectivity that is not wholly controlled from without.

"Ideology," Andrew writes, "must lose its connotation of massive univocity." Perhaps there is a univocity in the narrow bend of poststructuralism Andrew puts before us. Certainly there are severe limitations and weaknesses in its perspective that dozens of scholars are at work redressing. Clearly there is a need to reconceptualize ideology itself in an historical mode. Surely there is place for a hermeneutics engaged in "reading expressive language, fleshing out the indeterminate array of concepts and feelings introduced and regulated by the [art] work" (p. 188). Yet, whatever the other virtues of the hermeneutics Andrew favors, it cannot repress or even displace another body of work, broader than any single stream of poststructuralism, preoccupied with different problems and conceiving of the ends of criticism in different terms. It is not the theoretical dimensions of poststructural theory that create the compulsion to refute its claims; it is the institutional dimension—its battles for entrenchment within the academy, its desire for custody of the archive —that incites struggles for recognition and power, a point Andrew acknowledges at times without ever quite nudging it into the central position it demands, the one position from which the impulse toward polemic, on all sides, can be understood. That this understanding entails an understanding of ideology as well tells us something about the uses of an ideologically informed criticism, without, however, authorizing confidence in the ultimate resting point of Dudley Andrew's own suspicion—the adequacy of any over-arching theory.

—BILL NICHOLS

Controversy & Correspondence

PEPPERY SALT

Ernest Callenbach is right to feel hurt by my ingratitude to him for his efforts on my behalf, and his long, and in the circumstances (fairly) generous review of my book is suitable coals of fire on my head. However, I feel no guilt towards the University of California Press and *Film Quarterly* and their various boards and committees of academic advisers. Although four chapters of *Film Style and Technology: History and Analysis* are based on material that was in three articles published in *Film Quarterly,* this material has been reorganized and considerably expanded. (As published in *FQ* those articles totalled 23,000 words, whereas the chapters with the same titles in my book total 35,000 rewritten words. There are about 250,000 words in my book, so less than 10% (not half as Ernest Callenbach has it) of my book has any close relation to anything published in *FQ*. More importantly, the University of California Press was given

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PEPPERY SALT

Ernest Callenbach is right to feel hurt by my ingratitude to him for his efforts on my behalf, and his long, and in the circumstances (fairly) generous review of my book is suitable coals of fire on my head. However, I feel no guilt towards the University of California Press and *Film Quarterly* and their various boards and committees of academic advisers. Although four chapters of *Film Style and Technology: History and Analysis* are based on material that was in three articles published in *Film Quarterly,* this material has been reorganized and considerably expanded. (As published in *FQ* those articles totalled 23,000 words, whereas the chapters with the same titles in my book total 35,000 rewritten words. There are about 250,000 words in my book, so less than 10% (not half as Ernest Callenbach has it) of my book has any close relation to anything published in *FQ*. More importantly, the University of California Press was given

the opportunity to publish my book in 1978, and for three years after that Ernest Callenbach gave me the impression that they *would* publish it, though I now see that this false impression probably arose from his enthusiasm for some parts of my work. However I have heard indirectly, via a passing stranger from California, that his enthusiasm for my work was not completely shared by the editorial board of *Film Quarterly,* which was opposed to the publication of my initial article on style analysis in 1974 (not 1977). Which makes me even more ungrateful to him personally, since he did get it published. But as you can tell from his review, Ernest Callenbach has no enthusiasm at all for my questioning of the basis of the favorite beliefs of many American literary intellectuals.

For it happens that later in 1974 Ernest Callenbach and *Film Quarterly* rejected an early and short version of my criticism of French film theorizing, including its basis in psychoanalysis, Marxism, and French-style linguistics, on the grounds that such grand, imposing, or venerable ideas could not possibly, merely because of those qualities, be vulnerable to my criticims. Although this is a reason *of a sort,* it did not seem to me a satisfactory argument against the logic of my charges, but I had lots of constructive historical research in progress, so I let the matter rest there. Shortly after this initial difficulty, *FQ* instituted a new policy against publishing purely theoretical articles, presumably to prevent the recurrence of such challenges to the prevailing psychoanalytic and left-wing party line. The editorial in *FQ* for Winter 1974–75 saying ". . . most people in film studies are leftists . . ." I took that at the time to be a signal from Ernest Callenbach to myself (and any similarly inclined person) to desist from attempting to criticize Marxist-based ideas in the magazine, and a later letter to myself spelt it out with respect to psychoanalysis. Nothing may be said against the Big Daddies Freud and Marx!

Despite these warnings, I foolishly did not take seriously the opinions of the anonymous readers on the brief critical introduction to my book, because I thought it would be obvious to whoever is in charge of the University of California Press that no film academics in America (or elsewhere) had the special competence and qualifications to pronounce by simple assertion, as they have done, to dispose of my *arguments* against various favorite beliefs by simply calling them "naive," or "jejune" or "crude" or "tendentious," and then leaving it at that, as Ernest Callenbach, and also all other readers for University of California Press, and later readers for various other American academic presses have done. After 11 years I have still not seen one single counter-argument against the arguments in my book criticizing various aspects of Marxism and psychoanalysis, including their basis, nor has Ernest Callenbach managed to produce a reasoned rebuttal, even taking advantage of the slightly distorted form in which he presents some of my arguments in his review. And they are *arguments,* not assertions. Most significantly, the strongholds of Marxist and psychoanalytic film theory in England (which have the full backing of the director of the British Film Institute behind them), namely the magazines *Screen* and *Framework,* and the Education and Publishing departments of the BFI itself, have made absolutely no answers to the criticisms in the introduction to my book, even though they have had copies of it since the beginning of 1984, when it was published in England.

But despite all the above events, I have never thought that the way I have been treated over this book is the result of a cabal against me, merely that it is the result of individuals acting independently to protect their own interests, though this does not lessen my anger when I think about the affair. In fact I have restrained myself from giving full expression to my feelings in my book, and in any case only people who hold baseless opinions unthinkingly are offended by the tone in which those opinions are questioned, as is clear from the completely positive reviews of my book here in England, where there has been absolutely no mention of the tone of my critical introduction.

As far as I know, unlike the many Americans, the few British film academics who were shown my book (and they were not friends of mine) by a few British publishers recommended its publication, but you should realize that the British market alone is too small to commercially support the publication of large, well-illustrated and *serious* books about film, which can only be achieved by co-publication with an American academic publisher. So here again American film academics call the tune, and that is exactly what happened in my case. The only subsidy for publishing film books here is from the British Film Institute, but of course this is controlled by the Marxists of the BFI Publishing Department who have managed to lose nearly $1,000,-000 in the last five years publishing their chosen texts written by their comrades.

I did not expect much recognition of my work on statistical style analysis, so I am not bitter on that score. As it happens Harv Bishop at the University of Colorado has recently finished an MA dissertation applying my methods to an analysis of the films of Peter Bogdanovich and their possible relationships to the work of other film-makers, which is enough to keep me happy for the moment. I understand that Bishop obtained a Scale of Shot distribution for at least one film quite close to that independently obtained by myself, and also that his results were even less flattering to the perceptiveness of writers about Bogdanovich than mine were with respect to Ophuls. I hope that doesn't get him into more trouble than I am in. Also David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson, though they had previously denigrated my work in various places, in their new book *The Classical Hollywood Cinema* take up my general approach in terms of investigating norms and differences both informally and statistically (though their sampling is highly suspect), and even use the specific technique of finding Average Shot Lengths to this end, though they do not acknowledge their source for this. Actually,

Kristin Thompson goes even further, and in her outline of stylistic developments 1909–1917 uses exactly the same previously unknown films I uncovered in my 1976 article on the early development of film form and the rise of continuity cinema (not in *FQ*, though recently republished in *Film Before Griffith*) to tell the same story in their book (except where she gets it seriously wrong), though she does not acknowledge her source in this case either. (Poetic justice, I hear Ernest Callenbach say, but I say that when it comes to dishonesty and dirty tricks, I am a mere beginner next to some American film academics.) Bordwell and Thompson's book also illustrates the danger of using references uncritically, in just the way that I correctly anticipated someone would in my book. There I mentioned as one likely future instance an article on film lighting in *Transactions of the Society of Motion Picture Engineers* for May 1919. And just this very article is quoted in their book as a description of standard lighting practice for 1919, whereas a comparison with a reasonable sample of films of the period shows that it is years out of date in its recommendations. Scattered elsewhere in their book are failures to recognize other examples in the old journals of ignorant comment by non-professionals and exaggerated claims from Hollywood for what they are, which inevitably leads them to mistaken conclusions. In general, references are good, but they guarantee nothing.

And now we come to the issues with major importance for film studies which reach beyond the particular points at dispute. There are real, and I would have thought obvious, differences between the current states of scientific research and research in film, and these call into question the unthinking imitation of current scientific review procedures. Since it is only during the last couple of decades that film studies has very rapidly expanded and begun to be institutionalized, I would say it is a little early to be certain as to who is so distinguished a "scholar" that they should have the right to decide anonymously what should be published in books. Particularly since there is no one in film studies who knows as much as I do about the subjects in my book. Or is it the idea that merely having the post of professor in a department of film, and a seat on a few committees makes one an "established scholar"? Actually, the present elaborate refereeing system in science is a development of this century, and physical and chemical research got along very well indeed without it one hundred or so years ago. Ernest Callenbach is not up to date in his examples from the history of science, for in the last thirty years old conceptual frameworks (or "paradigms") have come to be abandoned for new ones very much more readily than they were in Max Planck's time, as researchers in cell biology, for instance, have noted. It is no longer necessary in science for a generation to pass away for radical new views to be considered, and if American film studies is to be so constituted that all its professors of film have to die off before any of their basic beliefs can be questioned in print, I want nothing to do with such a vision of mindless bureaucratic totalitarianism. And behind these more specific points are the really big questions that film academics and serious film magazines, including *FQ*, do not seem to want to face, but which they should feel obliged to face if they are so eager to attach the distinction "established scholars" to themselves, namely —What shall count as valid interpretation of films?, and why?, —Of what should film studies properly consist?, —and even beyond that —What is film studies actually *for*? —BARRY SALT

Ernest Callenbach replies:

I should obviously have done my own quantitative work more carefully; Salt is correct that I substantially overestimated the proportion of his book that had appeared in *FQ*. (There was also a typo in the date of his first article; 1974 is the right date.)

Contrary to Salt's reported rumor, my enthusiasm for his original quantitative and historical work was shared by the *FQ* board; we make decisions by consensus, and if its members had indeed been opposed to publication of his articles, they would never have seen print here (or perhaps anywhere, since they had evidently been turned down by all British film publications).

I have already described the reaction that Salt's later and more polemical writings inspired in American film academics, including the *FQ* board, and readers should refer to my review on this point. Far from being a "signal" to Salt, incidentally, *FQ*'s attempt to discourage "purely theoretical" articles was in fact aimed in quite another direction —at the many people who were then exploring semiotic, Marxist and psychoanalytic approaches to film but neglecting to deal with (or indeed sometimes even mention) any real films. We, like Salt, regard confrontation with actual films as the essential test of any proposed "theory."

I am delighted to hear of Harv Bishop's replication of some of Salt's findings; we would be pleased to know of other such efforts.

The use of referee procedures, whose imperfections are familiar to all in both the hard sciences and the humanities, nonetheless remains the only reasonably fair and impersonal method yet devised for apportioning the use of public resources. (In my *Ecotopia,* I imagined that granting bodies might give a fixed percentage of their money to high-risk proposals; and some lottery element now seems to me worth experimenting with. But we are speaking here of the real world.) In the days when, according to Salt, science got on well enough without refereeing, money came from rich patrons who often exercised notorious favoritism. The recent rapid progress in biology, of which I am as conscious as Salt, has in fact been a highly collective achievement—relying on normally refereed publication.

My review closed with much the same questions Salt's letter ends with. These are good questions, but they are also questions that writers and scholars have been addressing with respect to other arts for

several thousand years. It remains to be demonstrated how useful Salt's undoubted achievements will be in helping to answer them for film. But for what he has accomplished, the entire field will remain heavily in his debt.

(*Film Style and Technology: History and Analysis* is available from Starword, 3 Minford Gardens, London W14 OAN, for $33.00.)

FILM SOUND

Thanks for William Johnson's intelligent and provocative groundbreaking on film sound ["The Liberation of Echo: A New Hearing for Film Sound," *FQ,* Summer 1985]. There is, it seems to me, one argument for primacy of the image that Johnson hasn't adequately dealt with: You can run, say, *Intolerance* with no live accompaniment and no recorded music, just absolutely silent, and no one would deny that it's still a movie. But just try running a film that's all sound and no image, and see if anyone accepts it as a film. The sound-without-image idea has been tried often, in commercial films (*Wait Until Dark*) as well as experimental independents (Ken Jacobs's *Blonde Cobra*), but only in the form of short sequences in the middle of more conventional image-and-sound movies. Until someone finds an effective—and accepted—way to make a movie that consists of sound and no image, it's hard to argue for equality of both in film ontology.

Fortunately, debunking of the primacy of the image is not a prerequisite to the intelligent and exciting exploration of the interrelationships of sound and image. Johnson's article succeeds in what it aims at: opening up "new perspectives on the film." —ROBERT C. CUMBOW

William Johnson replies:—

I'm grateful for Robert Cumbow's kind remarks and also for the opportunity to amplify my contention that sound is ontologically equal to the image.

If *Intolerance* is projected without music, then the resulting silence itself constitutes the sound component, and the audience will experience the image-plus-silence differently from image-plus-music. The fact that (to my knowledge) no full-length film has been made with sound and no image may be attributed to pro-image bias among filmmakers and audiences, since there is no theoretical reason why such a film should not be made. If anyone wishes to argue that a film must provide something for the eyes to focus on or else it is not a film (the ears, of course, do not focus), a blank screen or the projection of black leader may serve this purpose.

In practice, any sustained use of image without sound or sound without image belongs in the realm of experimental film-making: general audiences protest impartially when either the image *or* the sound track fails. WILLIAM JOHNSON

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